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LIBROS: LEARNING TO IMPROVE BOOK RESOURCE OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS, RWANDA

TECHNICAL STUDY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024

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solutions through innovation

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RELATED WORKS

- LIBROS Rwanda Final Brief
- To access all research from the LIBROS study, please visit: https://www.edu-links.org/resources/study-libros-learning-improve-book-resource-operational-systems

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DEFINITIONS

- **Book Supply Chain (BSC):** the process of making, selling, and delivering books from their manufacture to their distribution and sale (Fredriksen & Brar, 2015; USAID, 2022; World Bank, 2019).
- **Textbook:** a comprehensive written material used as a primary resource for teaching a particular subject or topic. It typically contains structured information, explanations, illustrations, and exercises designed to facilitate learning and comprehension by learners.
- **Trade books:** books published for a general audience and available through regular book dealers, such as story books, picture books, or other everyday text materials such as magazines and newspapers.
- **Title development:** the creation of book content to support teaching and learning, including translating or versioning content for new languages and contexts.
- **Book use:** the effective use of books by teachers and students in classrooms, students, and parents at home, which is required for benefits to be realized.
- **Multilateral Partnerships:** collaborations between Rwandan government institutions, international funding agencies, international and local non-government organizations, and the private industry to improve the BSC in Rwanda.

ABBREVIATIONS

BSC	Book Supply Chain
BLF	Building Learning Foundations
CBC	Competence-Based Curriculum
DDE	District Director of Education
DP	Development Partner
EDC	Education Development Center (USAID funded project)
EDT	Education Development Trust
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Industry
KBC	Knowledge-Based Curriculum
L3	Literacy, Language, and Learning Initiative
LARS	Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools Project
LIBROS	Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems
LOI	Language of Instruction
LMIC	Low- or Middle-Income Country
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MENAP	Multilingual Education National Action Plan
NESA	National Examination & School Inspection Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NST 1	National Strategy for Transformation
P1…P5	Primary 1, Primary 2, etc.
RCBI	Rwandan Children's Book Initiative
RCBO	Rwanda Children's Book Organization
REB	Rwanda Basic Education Board
RENCP	Rwanda Education NGOs Coordination Platform
RPHC5	Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (2022)
SD	Standard Deviation
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
UN	United Nations
UND	University of Notre Dame
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UR	University of Rwanda
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWEZO	UWEZO Youth Empowerment Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Textbooks and reading books are critical to children's learning. Yet, book scarcity persists in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including Rwanda. The World Bank (2022) estimates that the average pupil-textbook ratio is 3.5 in primary education in LMICs, meaning that around four pupils share one textbook. The Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) study seeks to identify and disseminate policy and programming strategies that can enhance children's access to quality textbooks and supplemental reading materials through improved book supply chain (BSC) systems at the primary education level.

BSC refers to the interconnected processes or phases by which books are produced, distributed, sold, and used. As the BSC involves multiple activities, improvement strategies vary by activity and context. In Rwanda, one such notable strategy over the past ten years has been the engagement of Multilateral Partnerships focusing on children's book title development, both for textbooks and trade books, and book use, in service to the creation of a nationwide reading culture.

LIBROS Rwanda explores the case study of Multilateral Partnerships in title development and book use. Partnerships have had a positive impact across several phases of the BSC and involved a wide range of stakeholders in Rwanda's education system. We investigated how the Partnership strategy emerged and was coordinated, its perceived characteristics and impacts, what challenges it encountered, and what additional support might be needed to maximize its benefits. Our findings and policy recommendations aim to contribute to the overall improvement of Rwanda's BSC. We share insights gained from the study to inform the efforts of other countries with similar policy goals.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

LIBROS Rwanda addresses three research questions (RQs):

- **RQ1:** What are the characteristics and perceived impacts of the Multilateral Partnerships to improve title development and use in Rwanda?
- **RQ2:** How and under what conditions were the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use developed and implemented?

- **RQ3:** What challenges were observed and addressed during the process of carrying out the Multilateral Partnerships to improve title development and use? What additional support is required for the full success of the Multilateral Partnerships?

METHODS

The study employed a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2013). This design provides an in-depth account and analysis of the characteristics of the Multilateral Partnerships in title development and book use, as well as its perceived impacts on the different elements and actors of the BSC system over the past 10 years. Our research involved 25 in-person interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from public institutions such as the Rwanda Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), funders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), publishing companies, and independent book writers.

The study engaged ten schools, selected purposefully to ensure representation of diverse backgrounds. The schools included both public and private institutions selected from rural and urban areas. At each school, we conducted two or three focus group discussions (FGDs), each involving a minimum of 6 participants. We organized FGDs into groups of teachers, learners, and parent representatives. In total, the team conducted 27 focus group discussions in the schools involving 187 participants. Additionally, the team conducted seven individual interviews with selected school headteachers and deputy heads of studies.

FINDINGS

RQ1: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE TITLE DEVELOPMENT AND USE IN RWANDA?

Partnership composition

The Multilateral Partnerships involve a number of stakeholders, including government institutions, international funding agencies, international and local non-government organizations, and private industry representatives. Together, stakeholders engage in the development of book titles. They also promote book use through establishing community libraries and stocking them with the books produced by the Partnerships in collaboration with parents and local leaders. Stakeholders use various communication platforms to coordinate and reinforce the Partnerships. The most noteworthy platform is the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), which receives strong guidance and leadership from MINEDUC.

Partnership establishment

The establishment of the current Multilateral Partnerships emerged in the early 2010s, primarily prompted by **two projects and the establishment of a coordination platform.** The cornerstone project was the **Literacy, Language, and Learning Initiative (L3)**, funded by USAID from 2011-2016**.** L3 brought together diverse expertise to create and distribute books that resonated with local values and traditions, laying the foundation for cultural and local relevance in children's book titles. Following closely was the **Advancing the Right to Read (ARR)** project, funded by Save the Children and other partners from 2013 to 2017, which propelled the Reading and Children's Book Initiative (RCBI) and co-founded the Rwanda Children's Book Organization (RCBO). Through these efforts, ARR significantly advanced the availability and quality of children's literature in Rwanda, fostering a love for reading from a young age. The third key foundation was the co-creation, by the Ministry of Education, REB, and USAID, of a multi-stakeholder platform called **Rwanda Reads** in 2012. Among other strategies, Rwanda Reads (later renamed Soma Rwanda) initiated National Literacy Month in 2015, which continues to be celebrated every September as a campaign dedicated to promoting a national reading culture. This initiative encouraged communities, schools, and organizations to celebrate and encourage reading across the country.

These three foundational initiatives paved the way for subsequent projects such as USAID Soma Umenye, Mureke Dusome, Itegure Gusoma, Tunoze Gusoma, Uburezi Iwacu, and Ibitabo Kuri Twese, all funded by USAID, and other initiatives such as Reading Ready, funded by the Results in Education for All Children (REACH) trust fund. The key partners involved in these efforts included government agencies, bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, authors, illustrators, publishers, printers, and local communities, all working collaboratively to elevate literacy and education in Rwanda. The collaborative approach is continually reflected in the Multilateral Partnerships involved in various initiatives focused on children's book title development and book use.

Perceived Partnership impacts

Study participants indicated that the partnerships have contributed to title development and book use by:

1. **Facilitating efforts to provide both urban and rural schools with textbooks** and other reading materials, such as storybooks. Before L3, ARR, and Rwanda Reads—three key initiatives mentioned earlier—there was very little published material available in Kinyarwanda, aside from textbooks and religious materials. These initiatives significantly impacted the growth of the Kinyarwanda-language publishing industry, especially by contributing to the production of over a thousand children's titles. However, children in urban areas exhibit greater motivation for

reading and borrowing books compared to their rural counterparts.

2. **Contributing to greater content development;** there has been a marked improvement in making the material more relevant for Rwanda's learners. For example, in response to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the Aegis Trust contributed to the inclusion of peace education content, emphasizing values of social cohesion in social science textbooks for primary schools.
3. **Helping to initiate the process for developing titles for children with special needs.**
4. **Enhancing book management systems,** especially at the school level.
5. **Encouraging parents and community members to engage in students' reading activities.** This resulted in raising awareness among students, parents, and communities about the significance and pleasure of reading.

RQ2: HOW AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS WERE THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TITLE DEVELOPMENT AND USE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED?

There were several critical success factors, both strategic and tactical, that contributed to the formation and performance of the Partnerships. Strategic factors pertain to establishment of the overarching goals of the BSC and planning the methods to achieve them. Rwanda's MINEDUC played a pivotal role. The ministry has a clearly articulated vision that aligns Partnership goals within the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and, more recently, with Rwanda's Foundational Learning Strategy. MINEDUC's guidance facilitated effective oversight and coordination of activities between partners.

Tactical factors refer to human, physical, and financial resources required to achieve the BSC's goal and planning. In Rwanda's BSC Partnerships, essential tactical factors included establishing practical and functional collaborations with effective coordination mechanisms. Among these, there was a leveraging of information technology, a prioritization of continuous capacity building, and the allocation as well as utilization of human, technical, and financial resources to attain strategic objectives. For instance, the ESWG united all stakeholders in education and played a key role in enhancing partners' collaboration in activities related to title development and use. Through the ESWG, development partners (DPs) actively engaged with the government to facilitate the implementation of various initiatives. Additionally, there was an emphasis on fostering collaboration among the partners themselves. DPs also conducted needs assessments as a preliminary step before engaging with the government, thus ensuring a comprehensive understanding of requirements and priorities.

RQ3: WHAT CHALLENGES WERE OBSERVED AND ADDRESSED DURING THE PROCESS OF CARRYING OUT THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS? WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS REQUIRED?

The research identified numerous challenges, some of which were primary issues directly linked to the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use. Others were secondary challenges which, though they did not have immediate or direct impact on the Partnerships, affected partners' overall engagement in developing books and promoting their effective use.

Primary challenges

There were two primary challenges:

1. Tension resulting from the differing expectations around intellectual property of titles.
2. A slow review and approval process.

Respondents, particularly from the private industry, were dissatisfied with the government's current requirement that REB own all textbook titles' copyrights. While the REB's intention for this requirement is to offer free access to these textbooks to all learners and teachers, some private industry partners perceived this as neglecting partners' contributions. This current government requirement stands in contrast with the previous practice, which allowed authors to retain their copyright and receive public recognition.

Additionally, the slow review and approval of titles was a notable barrier to the efficient functioning of the Partnerships, especially between REB and publishers or individual writers. Title development activities, such as content creation and the determination of language choices, were typically characterized by agreements between authors and publishers, which often took a while to conclude. Moreover, the requirement for all titles to undergo review and approval by the REB further prolonged the process.

Secondary challenges

Secondary challenges for the Partnerships were changes in educational policy, both at the national and the school level. First, there were abrupt changes in the Language of Instruction (LOI) from French to Kinyarwanda and then to English, which left participants struggling to develop new titles or adapt existing ones within a very short time.

Second, there was a major change in the national curriculum orientation, from a Knowledge Based

Curriculum to a Competence based Curriculum (CBC). Curriculum change also forced participants to adapt their titles as quickly as possible.

Third, challenges related to the management and distribution of produced titles, along with limited funding for further production, contributed to a national shortage of books. In fact, mismanagement and loss of titles have been persistent issues in the industry for decades. Additionally, while more schools have been constructed in recent years to accommodate the growing number of children in Rwanda's education system, there has not always been a parallel increase in educational resources, such as books and school librarians. This shortage of resources has made it difficult for schools to effectively manage available books and integrate them into classroom instruction, limiting students' access to essential learning materials.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the findings of our study highlight the crucial role and achievement of Rwanda's Multilateral Partnerships in children's book title development and use in homes, schools, and communities. Since the formation of the Multilateral Partnerships, there has been an evident improvement in the contextual relevance of the content, the number of titles developed, and the accessibility of books in schools and communities.

Various factors facilitated the formation of the Partnerships and their collective achievements. MINEDUC plays a pivotal role by aligning objectives of the Partnerships with the nation's educational strategy. Strategic alignment ensures coherent oversight and coordination. Tactically, the Partnerships leverage technology, prioritize capacity building, and optimize resource allocation. Additionally, the ESWG serves as a conduit for effective collaboration among stakeholders, facilitating the implementation of educational initiatives across the country.

Despite the achievements, some challenges persist. Firstly, there have been numerous, abrupt changes in education policies. Secondly, rapid school enrollment and retention outpaces the availability of educational resources, complicating effective book distribution and utilization. Lastly, there are also issues with REB's handling of intellectual property rights and approval processes.

To address challenges and further enhance the Partnerships' impact, we propose the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT

1. **Develop a national BSC Partnership framework** that supports the Foundational Learning Strategy in outlining clear BSC partner roles and objectives, promoting dialogue and planning

between all partners (including local communities), and improving communication of national education goals, all under MINEDUC's guidance.

2. **Improve NESA's on-the-ground monitoring and evaluation** of book needs, distribution, and use to keep book-related data up to date, promote the use of books in schools, and promptly identify book needs to reach the government's 1:1 student-book goal.

3. **Establish fairer intellectual property agreements with REB**: These agreements should acknowledge and reward the contributions of all individual collaborators—such as printers, writers, illustrators, and artists—by recognizing their roles in title credits and exploring options for shared copyright ownership or revenue participation. This approach not only secures the dedication of local creators but also promotes sustainable and equitable partnerships in title development.

4. **Streamline title review and approval processes** by involving REB representatives in title development and production and establishing in-house approval committees.

5. **Create an interpartner sustainability plan** that secures government funding for public and private title development and printing, editorial capacity building, and the production of resources for students with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER PARTNERS

6. **Promote interpartner complementarity to assist partners' needs** by sharing book usage and needs metrics, lessons learned, capacity-strengthening activities, and other useful resources.

7. **Advocate for public and private funding and development of material for students with disabilities** and use available funding to adapt current titles to digital audio platforms and braille prints.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER LMICs

Rwandan Partnerships offer valuable insights and actionable strategies for LMICs seeking to replicate Rwanda's success in improving their book supply chain. Below are our recommendations for adapting Rwanda's improvement strategy in other countries:

8. **Align all BSC government and partner efforts with national educational priorities** by strengthening the leadership, coordination, and oversight capacities of the Ministry of Education.

Rwanda's success is chiefly due to MINEDUC's leadership. MINEDUC's coordination ensures that partnership efforts align with national education priorities by affording collaboration platforms and overseeing stakeholder activities. Other countries should adopt similar approaches by aligning stakeholder initiatives with educational goals and priorities and establishing a central coordination body to unify efforts across different education interventions.

9. **Build centralized, diverse, and well-planned BSC partnerships** that leverage collaboration from all sectors of society, from international development partners to local communities and libraries.

   Rwanda's partnerships include government agencies, local and international development partners, communities, and private sector actors. In other contexts, partnerships should engage a diverse range of stakeholders to leverage their expertise, resources, and perspectives, all essential for comprehensive title development and book use. Partnership plans should clearly define the roles and strengths of each partner to better guide them toward the achievement of national educational goals.

10. **Integrate locally-developed content within the national BSC strategy** by promoting local capacity building and the participation of local stakeholders in partners activities and communication channels.

    A standout aspect of Rwanda's approach was its emphasis on local content development, supported by training and capacity building for local authors, illustrators, and publishers. Partnerships in other countries should prioritize developing locally relevant educational materials that reflect their culture, values, and languages. This involves investing in training programs to enhance local talent and ensuring that content aligns with the curriculum and educational standards.

11. **Boost community engagement and literacy programs** that encourage the use of books and promote the value of literacy beyond schools and classrooms.

    Rwanda's partnerships benefited from the active involvement of local communities and schools in promoting book use, highlighting the importance of grassroots engagement in fostering a reading culture. In other countries, partnerships should consider developing community-based programs that encourage reading and literacy, such as community libraries and reading clubs. These programs can play a crucial role in engaging parents, teachers, and community members, thereby supporting children's literacy development beyond the classroom.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF BOOKS IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

In 2022, the World Bank and UNICEF estimated that 70% of children in LMICs (a total of 502 million children) were facing learning poverty. They were unable to read a simple paragraph at age 10 – a situation that was exacerbated by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022).

Studies have repeatedly shown that increasing the availability of core teaching and learning materials (TLM), such as textbooks, teacher guides, and books for reading practice, is critical for improving student outcomes (Piper et al., 2018; Read, 2015). Others show that, among all school-level inputs, textbooks are among the most cost-effective for student achievement (Benavot, 2011; Heyneman et al., 1981; Verspoor et al., 1990). For instance, investing in textbooks has been found to have a higher rate of return on investment compared to investments in infrastructure or teacher salaries (Pritchett & Filmer, 1999). More recently, an experimental research study in Kenya (Piper et al., 2018) found that providing textbooks alongside teacher training resulted in increases in student test scores of 0.13 to 0.71 standard deviations (SD) in English, Swahili, and Math.

Evidence on trade books (also called supplemental reading materials and books for reading practice) remains relatively limited. However, within the limited evidence, studies have shown that the provision of trade books is also positively associated with improving children's learning outcomes, especially in early reading. For instance, a study on school inputs across 26 countries reported that schools with higher student performance were more likely to have a library than others. In Indonesia, the difference in student performance between schools with and without a school library was 0.62 SD. In Trinidad and Tobago, the difference was 0.54 SD. In Venezuela, the difference was 1.00 SD (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992).

Evidence also supports the positive association between the presence of books in home environments and children's reading development. In a 2019 cross-country study involving 35 LMICs, it was observed that the likelihood of young children ages three to five being on track in literacy development, defined as accurately recognizing and naming letters and words, almost doubled when at least one book was available at home as compared to none (Manu et al., 2019). This finding was echoed in another cross-country study in 14 LMICs that showed that the availability of reading materials in the home positively predicted early reading development (Zuilkowski et al., 2019).

SCARCITY OF BOOKS IN LMICs

Despite the importance of textbooks and reading books for children's learning, book scarcity persists in many LMICs. The World Bank (2022) estimates that the average pupil-textbook ratio is 3.5 in primary education in these countries, meaning about four pupils share one textbook. As stressed earlier, statistics on the availability of trade books at home or school are rare. However, some of the available data from the latest Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality assessment found that grade six students had an average of 15 books at home (Awich, 2021). These figures are markedly different from the average number of books in adolescent children's homes in industrialized countries. A cross-country study from 31 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries reported an average of 115 books (Sikora et al., 2019). Though the availability of books may not always equate to meaningful use, evidence strongly suggests that, independent of parental education, occupation, and household wealth, children growing up in homes with books are less likely to drop out of school than children from bookless homes. This finding holds in both high- and low-income countries and those with different political systems (Evans et al., 2010; Sikora et al., 2019).

Reasons for insufficient books in homes in LMICs vary and include individual and social factors. Some of the most frequently reported reasons include a weak reading culture at home, a lack of books in local languages, a lack of trained authors and illustrators (especially for children's books), poor-quality yet costly printing, and a lack of legal framework and political environments to support book sector development (ADEA, 2019; World Bank, 2021). Regardless of the reason, the persistent scarcity of textbooks and other trade books in LMICs indicates that providing sufficient books to learners at home and school necessitates a systemic and holistic approach across the BSC (GBA, 2024).

THE BSC AND RELATED CHALLENGES

BSC OVERVIEW

Students receive textbooks and trade books through BSCs. The activities and implementation strategies related to BSCs might differ depending on how books are financed, how education systems are organized and administered, and a range of supply chain considerations.

For example, textbooks for public primary schools are generally, but not always, funded by governments, often through donors such as the World Bank (Read, 2015). Trade books for public schools are generally funded by governments and donors for school use, if they receive any external funding at all. These titles may be also available for private schools and homes through booksellers. Countries that use common international languages such as English may purchase trade books from international publishers

or create their own titles in the international language to make them more relevant for students (World Bank, 2024). Countries with languages with a smaller book market, ranging from regional languages like Hausa (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, other countries) to national languages like Kom (Cameroon), may develop their books through public, private, and/or public-private partnerships.

Regardless of how a country acquires textbooks or trade books for children, common activities to all BSCs are: (1) planning and forecasting; (2) title development; (3) publishing; (4) printing; (5) procurement; (6) distribution; and (7) use (GBA, 2024).

1. **Planning and forecasting** are the initial activities of the BSC. They involve assessing the need for textbooks and trade books in a particular education context and planning the number of books needed and related activities for the short, medium, and long term. In well-functioning BSCs, this recurs at predictable times and intervals.

2. **Title development** involves creating book content to support teaching and learning, including translating or adapting content for new languages and contexts. This applies to both textbooks and trade books in countries that either use languages of instruction without available titles or seek to provide more contextualized and relevant content for students than what is available in international or national markets.

3. **Publishing**, broadly defined, includes the development, editing, graphic design, management, licensing, rights, and marketing of titles. This can be handled by the public sector, the private sector, or through public-private partnerships.

4. **Printing** is the process used to create copies of books. Governments may print books themselves, finance book printing in the private sector (this is the most common approach), or procure printed books through publishers.

5. **Procurement & Purchasing** is used to source books and related services, such as title development, printing, and distribution, regardless of source. Different procurement methods are used based on context and funding source.

6. **Distribution Management** refers to the process of moving books from their point of production to their point of use, through intermediary locations. This can be done through the public sector, private sector (logistics suppliers, booksellers, and other vendors), or a combination of approaches.

7. **Active or Effective Use** is the last activity in the BSC. Once books reach schools, they need to be used effectively. This means that books are either distributed directly to students or incorporated into a distribution system (rather than stored permanently), and/or that teachers

actively use the books for classroom instruction (particularly for textbooks) and reading practice (particularly for trade books).

Figure 1. Stages of the Book Supply Chain[1]



FREQUENT CHALLENGES IN THE BSC

Inefficiencies in the BSC are a common cause of the high-costs and low-availability of textbooks and trade books in many LMICs (Fredriksen & Brar, 2015). Challenges often include the following issues:

1. **In the planning and forecasting stage**, insufficient and irregular considerations for factors such as population growth, school enrollment, school calendars, production timelines, and book loss/damage frequently lead to a shortage of textbooks and trade books (ADEA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2016; Read, 2015). Effective planning and forecasting for trade books can often be more challenging due to, among other factors, policy complexity and, for some languages, the abundance of titles, as seen in a recent Cambodia BSC review (GBA, 2022). Decentralized purchasing at individual schools without an official ordering or management system adds to the difficulty. Ministries of education and donors in many LMICs concentrate almost exclusively on

[1] For additional information on the stages of the Book Supply Chain, see https://www.globalbookalliance.org/the-book-chain. This visualization of the book supply chain was created by the Global Book Alliance.

textbooks and rely on the private sector and/or DPs for trade books, leading to budgetary shortfalls and inadequate oversight (ADEA, 2019).

2. **In the title development stage**, the increasing focus on foundational literacy has supported the development of thousands of trade book titles in hundreds of languages over the past decade. However, trained writers, illustrators, and designers are still scarce in many LMICs (ADEA, 2019). In addition, open licensing remains in limited use, restricting access to titles even within the same country and limiting the number of titles that can be adapted for other languages and contexts. Existing digital platforms (e.g., the Global Digital Library, African Storybook, Pratham's Storyweaver, Bloom, and others) do not commonly provide print-ready book files, necessitating complex and expensive formatting work every time a title is printed for large-scale use (ADEA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2016). Although the World Bank's Read@Home initiative is addressing this through the development of the Early Learning Resource Network (Early Learning Resource Network, 2024), the number of openly licensed print-ready files in underserved languages (languages that do not have a large enough market to interest the private sector) is still far too low. Lastly, household poverty and a lack of parental awareness of the value of books at home for children's literacy development disincentivize the development of trade books by the private sector (ADEA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2016).

3. **In the publishing stage,** publishers in LMICs often face challenges competing with global education publishers such as Oxford University Press (UK) and Nathan (France) due to limited capacity and financial resources. The small and unreliable market for textbooks and trade books in these countries hinders publishers from investing in staff and equipment. Modern publishing is entirely digital and requires hardware and software that are regularly updated and maintained. Children's book publishing requires specific expertise that can only be developed if there is a market to sustain it. The Florence Agreement and the Nairobi Protocols on the Free Flow of Books and Information (UNESCO, 1999), which almost every LMIC has ratified, exempt finished books from customs duties and other import costs.

4. **In the printing stage**, the global nature of the industry is driven by input prices and the need for extremely expensive, high-efficiency printing presses that can produce hundreds of thousands or more copies of books every day. Countries that must import paper and ink and require related tariffs cannot have competitive printing industries if procurement is transparent and focused on value for money. Finally, raw materials for book production, such as paper and ink, are not exempt from taxes and duties, making it difficult for local printers to compete with large international companies (Read, 2015).

5. **In the procurement stage**, processes can be lengthy and complex, requiring high-level oversight as well as international and country-level expertise (a scarce resource). Due in large

part to inefficient procurement, book prices are highly variable by country, with little relationship between the price of production and the cost to the buyer (GBA, 2022). Prices for buyers, such as ministries of education, are sometimes much higher than production cost. Some solutions like using standard international procurement procedures could reduce this burden. For instance, the World Bank recently reduced book prices in one country from $9 per copy to $.50 per copy simply by using this standard approach (World Bank, 2024). Country-level factors also complicate the procurement of trade books. For example, a study in Cambodia revealed that the policy of school-level trade book procurement resulted in book scarcity and higher prices. This occurs because schools often have insufficient budgets and purchasing power to negotiate bulk discounts (EDC, forthcoming).

6. **In the distribution stage**, challenges begin when books leave printing plants and continue when books arrive in schools. Effective distribution often requires coordinating the packing and delivery of books for multiple grades and subjects through difficult terrain and weather conditions. Books are lost at every stage of the distribution process — at central warehouses, at local warehouses, and in schools (ADEA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2016; Read, 2015). This happens for a range of reasons, including theft, unrealistic distribution budgets and timelines, bad weather, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and damage due to pests (e.g., mice, termites, cockroaches) (Palmer et al., 2016).

7. **In the use stage**, the ultimate goal of textbooks and trade book provision is not just availability but effective use by teachers, students, and parents. The first step in effective use is school-level book management. Yet, many LMICs have no school-level systems for book management or provisions for book storage. Books are often damaged by water or pests during long-term storage. LMICs have few systems for the replenishment of lost or damaged books over the school year. Also, many books (especially trade books) are not used in classrooms but are stored in school libraries or storage rooms that are not accessible to children (ADEA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2016; Read, 2015). Parents face difficulty finding accessible trade book sellers (EDC, forthcoming). Digital books are becoming more widely available, but knowledge of how to find them is still limited (Becker, Angela et al., 2019), and device availability, electricity, and connectivity are still barriers to digital reading (World Bank, 2020).

In tackling these challenges, domestic governments and international partners have tried different strategies (Fredriksen & Brar, 2015). Notably, USAID has made a tremendous effort over the past decade to fund title development, producing thousands of titles through the All Children Reading Grand Challenge, country-level early-grade reading programs, and regional activities. Some LMICs have implemented country-level strategies for improving the BSC, which include: (1) streamlining curricula to reduce the number of textbooks required in each grade; (2) forming partnerships with national

publishing and printing firms (World Bank, 2020); and (3) improving distribution management. Finally, a few countries, including Cambodia (another LIBROS country), have started to use digital systems to improve textbook forecasting and financing. In general, however, governments and development partners continue to struggle to improve the BSC (Read, 2015; World Bank, 2020).

RWANDAN CONTEXT

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Rwanda is a small landlocked country of 26,338 km^2 (10,169 mi^2) located in East-Central Africa. The analysis of the Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC5) conducted in 2022 reveals that Rwanda's population was 13,246,394 as of August 2022, indicating an annual growth rate of 2.3% between 2012 and 2022. As of 2022, there are about 5.9 million children aged 17 and under, representing 45% of the total resident population. The male-to-female ratio of this group is roughly 50/50, and 75% reside in rural areas. In addition, out of Rwanda's resident population aged five and older, the disability prevalence rate was 3.4%, the prevalence being slightly higher among females (3.6%) than males (3.1%) (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), 2023).

Concerning language, the Rwandan constitution states that the national language is Kinyarwanda while the official languages are Kinyarwanda, French, and English. The LOI is English. The RPHC5 shows that 79% (6.5 million) of individuals aged 15 years and above can read and write with understanding in at least one of these languages.

The Government of Rwanda recognizes the role of education in economic transformation and social development. In this vein, the government and partners have sought to ensure that education is available and accessible to all Rwandese people. MINEDUC also aims to improve the quality and relevance of education with a conducive learning environment for learners (MINEDUC, 2018b). In a bid to improve the quality of education, the government produced an increased number of textbooks in all subjects, aiming for a pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1 in primary education. This target has been achieved in English, Kinyarwanda, and Mathematics, thanks in part to the intervention of DPs who prioritized these subjects as crucial for numeracy and literacy (MINEDUC, 2023a). However, over time, this significant improvement has been eroded by wear and tear of the textbooks, coupled with an unsustainable supply and increasing numbers of learners.

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN RWANDA

Rwanda has made improvements in the primary school net enrollment rate despite a slight variation in recent years. Based on the 2022/23 Education Statistical Yearbook, there is a decrease in the school enrollment rate of children aged 7-12 years, from 98.7% in 2017 to 97.7% in 2023, while the participation rate in the official school age for primary to 6-11 years rise from 92.2 in 2022 to 96.9% in 2023 (MINEDUC, 2024, 55).

Rwanda offers a Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) which was introduced in 2016. Currently, teaching emphasizes the development of learners' grade-level competencies and becoming more economically productive (REB, 2015). This is a shift from the previous Knowledge Based Curriculum (KBC). The main difference between KBC and CBC is that, while knowledge is measured against a standard knowledge base, CBC evaluates how competent the individual is in applying knowledge to practice. The Rwandan Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19 to 2023/24 (in strategic priority six: strengthening modern school infrastructure and facilities across all levels of education), insists on the provision of print textbooks to all public schools and on the availability of online materials for both public and private schools (MINEDUC, 2018).

The LOI in primary school is English from grade 1 throughout primary education. English as the LOI was implemented in 2016. Other languages, including French and Kinyarwanda, are taught as subjects.

Primary education in Rwanda has had several challenges because of changes in the curriculum and changes in the LOI policy. Some challenges have also resulted from the rapidly growing population with crowded classrooms making TLMs insufficient (MINEDUC, 2018; L3, 2017; Nkurunziza et al., 2012).

Challenges persist across subjects and grades in Rwanda's primary schools. The Rwanda Learning Achievement Assessment of 2014 showed that only 45.3% of primary grade two (P2) pupils demonstrated grade-level literacy competency in Kinyarwanda and 32.9% in numeracy. In P5, 44.1% demonstrated competency in literacy in Kinyarwanda and 38.3% in numeracy (REB, 2016). As compared to the 2023 report by the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA, 2023), the Fifth Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools (LARS) showed that 82.7% of the P3 learners who were assessed met the national proficiency benchmarks in Kinyarwanda reading comprehension expectations while 46.1% met the national proficiency benchmarks in English reading comprehension (NESA, 2023, 4-5). Learners' performance is lower in English compared to other subjects assessed in primary (P3 and P6) and secondary (S3) education.

LARS 2023 also indicates that some of the factors associated with low-performance in English in lower primary (P1 – P3) include low English proficiency of teachers and the lack of English TLM, especially for learners with disabilities (NESA, 2023).

CHALLENGES IN RWANDA'S BSC

For this report, we limit our discussion below to challenges and strategies related to title development and use in Rwanda primary education. We explored challenges and improvement strategies in Rwanda's primary BSC over the past decade through a review of relevant literature and consultations with stakeholders. In the last ten years, Rwanda's education system has undergone various changes that have negatively impacted the attainment of the 1:1 pupil-textbook ratio. These include changes in LOI from French to Kinyarwanda to English and changes in curriculum from KBC to CBC.

MINEDUC projections on pupil-textbook ratio

The Rwandan Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19 to 2023/24 recommends a pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1 for basic education in all subjects (MINEDUC, 2018). This has, however, not been fulfilled in practice. For example, in primary schools, as 2021/2022, the pupil-textbook ratio is 1:1 only in Kinyarwanda, English, and Mathematics subject textbooks but higher for other subjects, as illustrated in **Table 1** (MINEDUC, 2023a).

Table 1. Pupil-textbook ratio

Subject	2018	2019	2020/2021	2021/2022
Kinyarwanda	1:1	2:1	1:1	1:1
English	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
Mathematics	2:1	2:1	2:1	1:1
Social & Religious Studies	3:1	3:1	3:1	3:1
Elementary Science & Technology	4:1	4:1	5:1	5:1

Source: MINEDUC, 2023a, p.100

Table 1 shows that the pupil-textbook ratio is higher for Social and Religious Studies and Elementary Science and Technology, as of 2021/2022. The significant achievements in Kinyarwanda and English are due in part to the significant contribution of the partners. In fact, since 2011, the USAID L3 project has developed Kinyarwanda titles, which were distributed between 2014 and 2016, ensuring a 1:1 book to

student ratio for lower primary students. The USAID Soma Umenye project continued this initiative since 2018, and Building Learning Foundations (BLF) has contributed English textbooks since 2016.

However, the 1:1 ratio since 2022 has significantly declined. For instance, according to a national census conducted by the Tunoze Gusoma project in November 2023, only about 20 (3%) of 661 sampled schools maintained the 1:1 ratio for Kinyarwanda (USAID, 2023). According to USAID Tunoze Gusoma respondents, the decrease in book supply was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. During COVID-19, schools were closed, and students were encouraged to take books home to support learning. Unfortunately, many students did not return their textbooks, which got lost or decayed despite their expected bookshelf life of three years. Additionally, the government built about 600 new schools as satellites to existing ones, along with additional classrooms in existing schools to reduce the student-teacher ratio. Despite this surge in schools and classrooms, the government printed no new books for the new schools, due in part to the assumption that pupils could share their textbooks. Currently, stakeholders are reviewing existing titles and planning new print runs through the Partnerships.

Changes in LOI

From 1994 to 2008, Kinyarwanda, French, and English were used as LOIs, depending on the school's choice and grade level. In 2008, English became the only LOI in the national education system at all levels. In 2011, Kinyarwanda was re-institutionalized to be the medium of instruction at pre-primary and primary levels and the rest of levels using English. Since 2019, all levels have to use English as the LOI (MINEDUC, 2019).

The constant language reforms in the Rwandan education system gave schools and BSC partners no transitional period before implementation. Thus, no planning, development, and provision of TLMs in English preceded the LOI policy changes in an adequate manner (Pearson, 2013). The existing books were no longer aligned with the current LOI and thus could not be used (Ndihokubwayo & Habiyaremye, 2018). Adaptation was very pricey for all partners in the BSC system.

Changes in curriculum

In 2016, Rwanda's primary education system changed from KBC to CBC. KBC emphasizes knowledge acquisition, while CBC focuses on skills acquisition and application for learners' lifelong development (Ngendahayo & Askell-Williams, 2016). The curricular shift caused the shortage in primary textbook provision to become more pronounced, as the KBC textbooks did not cover skill development (MINEDUC, 2018; Ndihokubwayo & Habiyambere, 2018). Consequently, the curriculum misalignment exacerbated textbook shortages among teachers and learners in primary schools (Umuhoza &

Uworwabayeho, 2021).

Lack of textbooks for children with special needs

There is a lack of textbooks and reading materials for pupils with special needs, partly due to the low demand from the relatively small population of learners with special needs (USAID & Save the Children, 2021). Thus, publishers have little incentive to publish textbooks and readers for people with special education needs (Save the Children, 2019).

Lack of book use guidelines

Amidst the shortages, headteachers and teachers in some schools stored textbooks in their offices and the books remained unused (Umuhoza & Uworwabayeho, 2021; Fredriksen & Brar, 2015). This might be due to schools having no book use guidelines and headteachers being scared that books could be stolen or damaged once handed over to students or teachers. While school-level textbook management strategy could be a well-reasoned decision, it meant a loss of opportunities to read and learn from the available textbooks. At the same time, the method complicates textbook planning and forecasting as it makes data on textbook availability and use imprecise and unpredictable (Lizzi et al., 2017).

RECENT BOOK SUPPLY CHAIN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Over the last decade, various domestic and international stakeholders have implemented strategies to address the challenges in Rwanda's BSC. Notable among these strategies are the BSC Multilateral Partnerships, particularly in book development and use, which are the focus of this report.

As detailed in the findings section, Partnerships include various stakeholders, such as the government and MINEDUC, national and international NGOs, and development partners contributing to producing a variety of print and online reading materials. Collectively, Multilateral Partnerships have been successful in improving the availability of books at schools and within children's communities. In addition to raising partners' awareness on developing titles for students with special needs, stakeholders also perceive an improvement in book management at the school level, an increase in parents' involvement in borrowing books for their children, and advancement in reading culture, among other impacts. These accomplishments, along with their underlying factors, hold the potential to offer valuable policy and practice insights for delivering high-quality textbooks and trade books to both students and educators in Rwanda and other nations pursuing similar educational objectives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

The goal of LIBROS Rwanda was to identify policy and practice pathways to strengthen the primary school-level BSC in Rwanda and potentially other LMICs with similar policy demands. To achieve this goal, we conducted a case study on a specific strategy that showed notable achievements in Rwanda, namely Multilateral Partnerships in book development and use.

As elaborated below, the Partnerships strategy involved intensive investment by the Government of Rwanda through MINEDUC and REB in collaboration with partners, such as USAID, UNICEF, NGOs like Save the Children, and private publishing houses. Partnerships led to improvement in both the quantity and quality in children's book titles and use.

Our research identified Multilateral Partnerships as the strategy of study through a three step ecosystem diagnostic process. In **Step 1**, we explored notable challenges and improvement strategies in Rwanda's primary BSC during the past ten years. In **Step 2**, the team validated and prioritized the identified improvements and strategies through a two day review workshop with experts and key stakeholders who are knowledgeable about Rwanda's BSC and the broader primary education system. In **Step 3**, the team evaluated the prioritized strategies and determined the specific strategy the LIBROS study would examine in depth. The selected case study was Multilateral Partnerships in title development and use.

Multilateral Partnerships were implemented in Rwanda to leverage the expertise and resources of each partner in the BSC, share financial contributions, and ensure availability, accessibility, and use of relevant books in schools and in the community. It was therefore perceived as an improvement strategy worth investigating to provide valuable evidence-based insights that other countries can adapt and implement according to their contexts.

Annex 4 shows a comprehensive overview of the processes and outcomes of the ecosystem diagnosis that directed the selection choice of the case in this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following three research questions guided the study:

- **RQ1:** What are the characteristics and perceived impacts of the Multilateral Partnerships to improve title development and use in Rwanda?
- **RQ2:** How and under what conditions were the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use developed and implemented?

- **RQ3:** What challenges were observed and addressed during the process of carrying out the Multilateral Partnerships to improve title development and use? What additional support is required for the full success of the Multilateral Partnerships?

RESEARCH METHODS

DESIGN

We employed a qualitative case study design to ensure an in-depth account and analysis for collecting primary data (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, an extensive desk review provided supplementary data.

PARTICIPANTS

We engaged 210 participants from various institutions, areas of expertise, and professional roles who are active across Rwanda's BSC and education system. We used multiple sampling strategies to recruit study participants, starting with participants for title development and then proceeding with stakeholders involved in book use.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FOR TITLE DEVELOPMENT

We selected interview participants for title development using a combination of reputational and snowball sampling methods. First, we used reputational sampling to select "...people with great knowledge and/or influence who can shed light on the inquiry issues…" (Patton, 2002, p. 268). In doing so, we consulted with existing partners of the education ecosystem to identify more individuals (or institutions) who were suitable for participation in the study. We identified stakeholders from MINEDUC, REB, the Department of Curriculum Development, private industry actors like publishers and printing companies, as well as DPs such as USAID, Save the Children, and other NGOs/INGOs.

Subsequently, we employed snowball sampling to expand the initial selection. Through consultations with participants identified in the Ecosystem Diagnosis Workshop, we sought additional contacts to provide additional perspectives, insights, and validation. We continued with the sampling of new participants until consensus was reached on data redundancy and saturation. In total, we identified 30 eligible individuals, but five of them could not participate in this study due to schedule conflicts, leaving 25 participants. **Table 2** presents the final study participants for the interviews.

Table 2. Participants in the interviews

Organization / Individual	Type	Number of Interviews
REB	Government Institution	2
National Examination & School Inspection Authority (NESA)	Government Institution	1
District Director of Education	Government Institution	1
Sector Education Inspector	Government Institution	1
Writer, University of Rwanda	Government Institution	1
Education Sector Program Implementation Plan MINEDUC/ UNICEF	Government Ministry / DP	1
USAID Mission, Education Program	DP	1
USAID/Tunoze Gusoma Program	DP	1
Save the Children, Education Program	DP	1
FCBO/BLF	DP	1
Aegis Trust, Education Program	DP	1
Education Development Consultant	Private Industry	1
Rwanda Children's Book Organisation	Private Industry	1
Social Impact Publishing House	Private Industry	1
Master Consultancy and Editing Center	Private Industry	1
Freelance Illustrator	Private Industry	1
Freelance Writer	Private Industry	1
Head Teachers / Director of Studies	Schools	7
Total		*25*

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FOR BOOK USE

For book use, we employed a maximum variation sampling approach. This approach enabled the engagement of participants from various schools, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences among different stakeholders at the school level, including teachers, headteachers, parents, and students. This method aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of book utilization practices. To achieve this, we selected a total of ten primary schools, allowing for comparisons across various criteria, including school funding, ownership, management (public/government-owned or aided, and private schools), location (rural, urban, and peri-urban areas), and extent of support services for learners with special needs and the region (districts, provinces, and the City of Kigali). For confidentiality, the names of the schools are not mentioned in **Table 3**.

At each school, we conducted three FGDs. A first FGD involving a minimum of six teachers representing various grade levels (grades 1-6), a second FGD with at least six parent representatives, including at least one mother, and a third FGD with a minimum of 4 students of different ages, ensuring gender balance of two girls and two boys. We selected teacher FGD participants based on their availability during the interview period. We determined the composition of parent FGDs through consultation with the headteacher. The team organized student FGDs based on consultations with both the headteacher and the teachers interviewed in the study. Additionally, we conducted seven individual interviews, six with headteachers and one with the Deputy of Studies. At the time of data collection, it was not possible to engage with leaders from three additional schools because of schedule conflicts.

Table 3. Distribution of the sampled schools

School Name	Number of Participants	School Type	Location		
			Rural or Urban	District	Province
School A	18	Public	Rural	Nyabihu	Western
School B	19	Private	Urban	Rubavu	Western
School C	23	Private	Urban	Musanze	Northern
School D	20	Public/Inclusive	Rural	Rulindo	Northern
School E	23	Public	Semiurban	Gasabo	Kigali
School F	21	Public	Urban	Nyarugenge	Kigali
School G	13	Public/Special	Urban	Rwamagana	Eastern

School Name	Number of Participants	School Type	Location		
			Rural or Urban	District	Province
		need			
School H	15	Public	Rural	Kayonza	Eastern
School I	22	Public	Urban	Muhanga	Southern
School J	13	Private	Rural	Kamonyi	Southern
Total	187	-	-	10	5

DATA COLLECTION

We used semi-structured interview protocols across all tiers. All protocols covered themes relating to the issues in the RQs. Interview items reflected, for instance, participants' understanding of the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use, their involvement in the development, implementation and/or support of this strategy, and changes made in their work due to this improvement strategy. Other themes were the impacts of the BSC improvement strategy that participants had observed and/or heard about, the factors that contributed positively or negatively to the development, implementation, and/or support of the strategy, or the overall effectiveness of the BSC system. Some participants voiced recommendations for further efforts to support, refine, or extend the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use.

We tailored a segment of each session to match participant expertise and roles, and delved into national policies concerning the BSC with government actors, engagement and support for local communities with non-governmental organizations, and special support from other partners within private industries. Additionally, we examined how students manage and use books within schools and the surrounding communities. The implementation of these protocols occurred concurrently, without a prescribed order for engaging with each type of participant. Instead, the team relied on the availability of correspondents from each institution.

In conducting the interviews, the research team was organized into three sub-teams, each consisting of two or three members who were either university assistant lecturers or PhD students. Teams were strategically assigned to different study participants to ensure a smooth data gathering process. Each team comprised an interviewer and a notetaker, who simultaneously acted as the audio recorder, with

occasional observers present. They contacted participants at the individual's workplace or at a location convenient for them.

Throughout the review of existing literature on the BSC, the team observed that all partners, except for schools and local communities, were engaged in both title development and use. However, for the sake of facilitating interviews, we categorized participants based on their primary involvement in either title development or use. Subsequently, we approached individuals according to their primary role.

First, we interacted with participants involved in title development. After obtaining their consent as informants and providing a brief overview of title development, the research team explained the purpose of the interview, which was to understand each institution's role in title development, assess the observed impact of their participation, identify any challenges they encountered, and gather further recommendations. The one-to-one interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Second, when engaging with participants involved in book use, our focus was on clarifying that book use refers to the effective use of books by teachers, students, or the wider community. Book use includes use of textbooks in classroom instruction, particularly in subject areas, and engaging in reading practices, especially with trade books, to promote literacy and comprehension skills.

At the schools, the researchers' primary focus was to engage with the headteachers of selected schools within their districts. Prior to the school visits, we contacted the school leaders to explain the purpose of the research and request their assistance in facilitating the activity. They supported the research team by informing the school community (teachers, librarian, learners, parents) about the upcoming FGDs, providing details such as the interview date, time, and venue.

Upon arrival at the school, the headteachers warmly welcomed the researchers. They then proceeded to invite the interviewees, ensuring they signed the informed consent forms. Once preliminary tasks were completed, headteachers allocated suitable rooms for the interviews. The researchers introduced themselves and the LIBROS study to the participants during the FGDs and initiated the interviews.

The teams conducted all 3 categories of focus groups (teachers, learners, and parents) sequentially and in varying order at schools where only one research team worked. At schools where two separate research teams worked, interviews for two different categories of participants ran simultaneously. Each FGD lasted between 20 and 60 minutes.

On average, teacher FGDs comprised four to six individuals. Discussions in these groups revolved around the effective use of books by both teachers and learners, their role in title development, and their awareness of any NGOs/INGOs making books available. Student FGDs involved the researchers showing the participants either a textbook selected from the school library or a photo depicting a parent supporting their children in reading. The textbook served as an initial prompt to engage students

in the conversation, with the researchers asking them to describe what they observed. Subsequent discussions revolved around distinguishing between textbooks and trade books, as well as the availability and use of each type of material. Conversations with parents focused on their role in supporting children's use of books, whether through purchasing books for them or allocating time for them to read the books provided by their schools. Additionally, discussions centered on the parents' collaboration with school regarding the use of books.

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the team conducted a workshop to evaluate the data collection process and ensure that all data were structured appropriately before translation from Kinyarwanda into English. This marked the beginning of the data analysis phase. In addition to the primary data, the team collected relevant governmental and non-governmental policy and program documents. Documents contained information on, for instance, government or non-governmental policies or programs in the BSC system; the background, monitoring, or evaluation documents of the specific improvement strategy examined in Rwanda; and the recent statistics of primary-level book provision at national and sub-national levels.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The interviews and FGDs were conducted and recorded either in Kinyarwanda or in English depending on the preference of the participants. The audio interviews were later transcribed verbatim into the language used. Recordings in Kinyarwanda were then translated into English. To ensure quality in the analysis, the University of Rwanda (UR) team was trained for two days before coding to understand the meaning of each code and its application.

A codebook was generated by a multidisciplinary team through an iterative process, using a mix of deductive and inductive approaches. Deductively, the research team developed a list of codes based on the RQs and topics in the interview guides. This was followed by the inductive approach, where the research team developed additional codes emanating from the data. A sample of transcripts were read by the team to allow them to annotate and voice suggestions for revising the codebook. Consensus was reached before the suggested codes were included in the code book. The data was then entered into NVIVO Version 14 for coding and analysis. Coding and analysis were conducted by a multidisciplinary team composed of members from UR and the ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) following the thematic approaches of qualitative research. The research team identified key themes and patterns in the data using exploratory analysis and query tools in NVIVO Version 14, exploring the data for differences and convergence within and across the created categories of respondents. Issues emerging during the coding and analysis were resolved through consensus meetings. Similarly, integration of notes and observations was done for triangulation (i.e., validation and comparison) of the different data sources. The research team summarized the key findings for each identified theme in a data matrix.

Preliminary findings were shared and discussed with the research team composed of members from University of Notre Dame (UND), RAN, and UR to reach a consensus on interpretations of the findings in line with the study objectives. Narratives and relevant quotes that depict the thematic areas for each RQ were generated and used to support the report writing.

RESEARCH ETHICS

As part of the ethical requirements, the team obtained ethical research approvals from ethics review boards at UR's College of Education Directorate of Research and Innovations and UND during the research planning phase. Prior to interviews, all participants were individually asked to sign the informed consent form.

Confidentiality was essential in this LIBROS study due to the sampling approaches used in the research. Since participants were identified through the contacts or networks of other participants, it was critical to minimize the risk of violating confidentiality. Participant confidentiality was of particular importance since there were only a small number of organizations and individuals involved in the specific BSC improvement strategy we investigated. Participant information such as occupation and/or title were anonymized or replaced with pseudonyms.

No participant received any incentive for participation in the study. However, participants were provided with transport reimbursement if their participation required travel to and from the designated data collection site.

LIMITATIONS

The research team's presentation of the impacts of the BSC improvement strategy is based on the study participants' perceptions. Our dataset includes input from a broad range of stakeholders across different levels of the education system. It includes the contribution of participants at the ten schools selected in the four provinces of the country besides Kigali City, capturing varying school environments and the manner in which the Partnerships' efforts were enacted on the ground in these varying settings. The team considered the insights to be rich. However, insights do not confirm definitive cause-and-effect relationships as traditional experimental studies would do. The research team therefore presents its study findings as illustrative instances of how Multilateral Partnerships might enhance aspects of BSC.

FINDINGS

RQ1: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TITLE DEVELOPMENT AND BOOK USE?

Overall, Multilateral Partnerships have been crucial in improving Rwanda's BSC, especially in title development and use. The Government of Rwanda, through MINEDUC and REB, provides leadership and coordination among the partners. The latter operate within the ESWG framework to harmonize their education interventions.

In this section, we first describe the different organizations involved in the Partnerships, naming them and outlining their roles, and characterizing the relationships between them. Beyond the composition of the Partnerships and the relationships between these organizations, we also discuss the characteristics of the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and use. Lastly, we highlight the notable impacts created by the Partnerships.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The initial formation of Rwanda's current Partnership in title development and book use began to emerge in the early 2010s, prompted by three key initiatives:

1. **Literacy, Language, and Learning Initiative (L3):** Funded by USAID from 2011-2016, L3 engaged diverse expertise to create and distribute books reflecting local values and traditions.
2. **Advancing the Right to Read (ARR):** Funded by Save the Children and other partners from 2013-2017, ARR advanced the Reading and Children's Book Initiative (RCBI) and co-created the Rwanda Children's Book Organization (RCBO).
3. **Soma Rwanda**, formerly **Rwanda Reads:** Co-created by MINEDUC, REB, and USAID in 2012, this multi-stakeholder platform initiated a National Literacy Month to promote a reading culture, among other activities.

The initial success of these collaborations and their achievements laid the groundwork for the Multilateral Partnerships in the BSC in Rwanda. Below are the key partners involved in the implementation and achievements of the three foundational projects.

1. Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative (L3)

USAID's L3 project marked a significant turning point in developing and promoting local educational materials in Rwandan schools. By empowering communities to create and distribute culturally relevant books, L3 laid the foundation for sustainable literacy initiatives (EDC, 2017; USAID, n.d.). L3 aimed to address critical issues in Rwanda's educational system, focusing on early-grade literacy and numeracy, low literacy and numeracy rates, poor quality of TLMs, and language barriers in education.

The implementation of the L3 activities involved multiple partnerships. It leveraged diverse expertise, with the Education Development Center (EDC) contributing global best practices and technical expertise in literacy and numeracy education. Further collaboration with local partners ensured that the developed titles were culturally and linguistically relevant and effective in promoting literacy. Additionally, building local capacity and embedding the project's components within local institutions was crucial for scalability and sustainability.

Below are the main partners involved in the L3 initiative with distinct and complementary roles and responsibilities:

- **USAID:** Funder; supported the project's implementation and goals.
- **EDC:** Lead implementer providing technical assistance, developing educational materials, and overseeing project activities.
- **MINEDUC:** Closely collaborated with EDC to integrate project initiatives into national education systems and policies.
- **REB:** Collaborated on educational material development, teacher training, and monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- **Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO):** Contributed volunteer teachers and technical experts to support capacity-building in Rwandan schools.
- **Concern Worldwide:** Assisted in implementing various project components, focusing on teacher training and professional development.
- **International Education Exchange (IEE):** Played a role in providing teacher training and developing teaching and learning resources.

L3 partnerships had significant achievements, including the production and collection of 8 million units of TLMs, such as student readers, teachers' guides, read-aloud story collections, and audio lessons

accessible via cell phones, SD cards, and speakers. TLMs were provided to 2,741 schools, benefiting 1,835,500 students from P1 to P4 with resources developed by L3. Additionally, 85 Community Mobile Libraries (CMLs) were established, giving community members across the country access to rich and enjoyable reading materials. Through CMLs, 95,000 books were distributed, along with 100,000 books to Teacher Training College (TTC) libraries. Moreover, 854 story titles and problem sets were created through Mathematics Camps and Writers' Workshops. The initiative also supported three Andika Rwanda (the national story writing and poetry competition) events, resulting in the annual publication of 5,000 copies of Andika Rwanda books (EDC, 2017; USAID, n.d.).

2. Advancing the Right to Read (ARR)

ARR, launched by Save the Children in 2013, aimed to address significant literacy gaps among young children in Rwanda. It responded to the need for early childhood education interventions to prepare children for primary school and improve their reading skills. The program targeted children aged 0-9, focusing on early interventions to build foundational skills crucial for lifelong learning (Save the Children, 2018).

Save the Children played a pivotal role in advancing children's literacy in Rwanda through ARR, including its Reading and Children's Book Initiative (RCBI) component launched in 2013, which later resulted in the creation of the Rwandan Children's Book Organization (RCBO). These initiatives fostered collaboration among international, national, and private sector stakeholders.

Key stakeholders in ARR and RCBI included USAID, Comic Relief, and the Department for International Development (DFID). Save the Children led the initiative, providing funding and overseeing program implementation. National entities such as MINEDUC ensured alignment with national education policies, while REB collaborated on developing and distributing educational materials. The Rwanda Education NGOs Coordination Platform (RENCP) coordinated efforts among NGOs to improve literacy.

ARR partnerships led to significant developments, including the creation of the RCBO to promote children's literacy and support the local publishing industry. Multiple publishing houses were established, and Andika Writers' Workshops provided training to local writers and illustrators to create culturally relevant books. Local publishers and distributors ensured the production and distribution of children's books and educational materials to schools and communities.

The foundational work of ARR also paved the way for subsequent literacy initiatives like Reading Ready and USAID's Mureke Dusome, further enriching the literacy landscape in Rwanda (Save the Children, 2018).

3. Rwanda Reads/Soma Rwanda

Rwanda Reads/Soma Rwanda is a nation-wide comprehensive literacy program established in 2012 by MINEDUC through REB in collaboration with different stakeholders. The initiative aims to promote a culture of reading and improve literacy rates among Rwandans through various programs and activities. The program focuses on promoting reading through campaigns, distributing learning materials, hosting reading contests, and establishing libraries and mobile libraries to enhance access to books (Nsanzimana, 2023). Key activities under Soma Rwanda include the National Literacy Month, celebrated every September, where numerous events such as book launches, distribution of learning materials, and literacy-promoting activities are organized (REB, 2021).

All national and international partners involved in promoting literacy play a part in Soma Rwanda. These include MINEDUC through REB, which leads Rwanda Reads by providing strategic direction, integrating literacy programs into the national curriculum, and ensuring policy support for literacy activities. MINEDUC also coordinates with other stakeholders to streamline efforts in improving literacy. Private industries, including writers and publishers, contribute to the development and distribution of reading resources. Local community organizations facilitate local reading activities, manage libraries, and mobilize volunteers to support literacy initiatives. They play a key role in ensuring that literacy programs are accessible and inclusive at the community level. DPs are involved in capacity building in title development, the provision of reading resources, organizing reading clubs, managing community libraries, and engaging parents and communities in promoting a culture of reading (Rubagumya, 2020; British Council, 2016; Nsanzimana, 2023).

USAID has been a significant contributor to Soma Rwanda, supporting early grade reading programs like L3, Soma Umenye, Mureke Dusome, Tunoze Gusoma, Itegure Gusoma, and Uburezi Iwacu. These programs have led to measurable improvements in literacy rates, particularly in Kinyarwanda (USAID, 2023).

The key achievements of Soma Rwanda have been the promotion of reading culture and the growth of the local publishing industry. Soma Rwanda has successfully implemented National Literacy Month for over a decade. Celebrated every September, the initiative includes reading competitions, book fairs, and community reading sessions, which engage participants from diverse backgrounds and increase public enthusiasm for reading.

The collaborative efforts within Soma Rwanda have significantly boosted the local publishing industry. Over 30 local children's book publishers have emerged, and more than 1,000 Kinyarwanda language titles have been developed and distributed, greatly enhancing the availability of culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate reading materials for young readers in Rwanda (USAID, 2021).

The partnerships built during the implementation of L3, ARR, and Soma Rwanda have paved the way for the formation and propagation of the Multilateral Partnerships that have improved title development and book use in Rwanda.

ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED IN THE PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR RELATIONS

The Multilateral Partnership actors can be organized into four broad categories: government agencies, development partners (DPs), private industry, and school and local community. **Table 4** summarizes the key actors per category and their role within the BSC.

Table 4. Organizations involved in the Multilateral Partnerships

Key Actor Category	Key Actor	Main Role
Government	MINEDUC	Governing agency
Government	REB	Planning, development, procurement, production, distribution of books
Government	National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA)	Monitoring and evaluation
Government	University of Rwanda	Development and evaluation
Government	Local governments	Distribution
Development Partners: International Funders	USAID, World Bank, FCDO, Save the Children	Funding title development and book use-related projects.
Development Partners: Implementing Organizations (synonymous with INGOs)	Save the Children, FHI360, EDT, Aegis Trust, Chemonics, World Vision, UNICEF, British Council	Production and distribution, training of local actors on title development, mobilization of local actors for book use
Private Industry	Book publishers, writers, designers, printers, distributors, book sellers	Production
Schools and local community (not local government)	Schools	Promoting book use

Key Actor Category	Key Actor	Main Role
Schools and local community (not local government)	Local Community	Promoting book use

Government

In Rwanda, the education system is supported by various government entities, including MINEDUC, REB, NESA, UR (public university), and local government structures. These organizations work together to develop, implement, and oversee education policies, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all Rwandan citizens.

MINEDUC leads in creating and enforcing education policies and guidelines, monitoring educational progress through data from REB, NESA, and UR. It coordinates national education initiatives, aiming for improved access to education across the country. REB is tasked with enhancing the quality of basic, specialized, and adult education, focusing on curriculum development, teacher training, and the distribution of educational materials. NESA complements REB's efforts by inspecting schools to ensure they meet educational standards and norms, focusing on the quality of infrastructure, teaching practices, and the use of textbooks in classrooms.

As the country's premier higher education institution, UR contributes to policy development and the education sector by providing quality education, conducting research, and nurturing ethical leaders. UR works closely with REB and NESA to ensure that university programs meet the sector's needs and offer insights for policy and strategy development.

Local government entities, from provinces down to villages, play a pivotal role in executing national policies at the community level. They collaborate with schools, parents, and other stakeholders to foster educational initiatives and community involvement. Specifically, they assist in gathering school data, distributing books, and managing community libraries, enhancing the availability and use of educational resources.

Government bodies ensure that Rwanda's education system is robust, inclusive, and effective, supporting the nation's goals for educational excellence and accessibility. As such, government bodies have provided the necessary guidance on the Partnerships' alignment of their efforts to the national education policy goals. They have guided collaboration among the partners and thereby the observed synergies that have enabled the development partners' as well as the implementing partners' contribution to improvement of the quality of education processes, including the BSC.

Development Partners and Implementing Organizations

The Government of Rwanda has collaborated with development partners (DPs) to improve the BSC. DPs have included international and local NGOs, which contribute to title development, book use, or both. Considering their main roles, DPs like USAID and the World Bank have provided funding to local as well as international NGOs to implement book-related projects:

> "USAID is not a direct implementer, they never go to the schools or to the field to distribute any books. They work through other NGOs… The World Bank also does not implement it. They find a partner they give money to do this work… So, the similarities [are] the objective; we all need to achieve high literacy or learning outcomes, but we don't use the same approach."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

The quote underscores how different DPs work together toward the same goal, but with distinct roles. Basically, the funders, like USAID and World Bank, focus on providing financial resources and setting objectives, while the implementing organizations are responsible for executing the projects and bringing the initiatives to life at the community level. There are some few cases where one DP plays both roles. For instance, beside its main role of implementer, Save the Children also funded ARR. In brief, over the past 10 years, the main international funders in Rwanda's title development and use have included USAID, the World Bank, the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and Save the Children. They have mostly supported the government by providing funding for projects and programs that contribute to the availability of quality, contextually appropriate content that is responsive to the learning needs of Rwanda's children as well as access and use of books at different levels.

USAID has funded projects such as: Uburezi Iwacu implemented by Word Vision, Tunoze Gusoma by FHI 360 and Save the Children, Ibitabo Kuri Twese by EDC, Soma Umenye by Chemonics International, Mureke Dusome by Save the Children, Twitegure Gusoma by UNICEF, L3 Project by EDC, and MCOP by FHI360.

The major focus of USAID-funded projects in early literacy development has been teacher training, learning outcomes assessment, system strengthening, production and distribution of textbooks and trade books – particularly in Kinyarwanda, and supporting book use in schools, homes, and communities:

"The first strong partner is REB and the publishers they work with. When they have prepared books, they work with MINEDUC. They inform us, for example, which publisher will provide the books. When the time comes to distribute the books, they instruct us to gather all the headteachers. We call all of them, and the publisher comes to distribute the books. Another partner is the district. There is an education unit at the district level that works with us on a daily basis. We always have regular meetings with that unit. In these meetings, when we discuss issues like the availability of books in subjects such as arts, science, or technology, they advocate for us and submit our requests to REB and MINEDUC. NESA, as an inspection organ, also works with us to ensure that books are made available. Another partner, Tunoze Guzoma, contributes significantly to developing a reading culture by providing books to schools. There are other partners we used to work with, such as Soma Umenye (meaning "Read and Know"), which used to distribute books to schools. Another one is Building Learning Foundations (BLF), although nowadays it is not very involved in book development. Currently, Soma Umenye and Tunoze Gusoma [both USAID-funded] are the ones helping us the most."

— Government stakeholder

FCDO has funded the Education Development Trust (EDT) and the British Council to implement the Building Learning Foundations (BLF) project. FCDO has provided the funds used for needs analysis, content development, printing and distribution of Mathematics and English books for lower primary (P1 to P3), and training of English and Mathematics teachers in book use. Through its Innovation for Education Fund, FCDO has also funded the RCBI. Data shows that the aim of this intervention is to:

> "… support publishers to produce high quality, age appropriate, Kinyarwanda children's books and distribute these to schools, at the same time as improving teachers' skills, knowledge, and confidence to use books in support of literacy acquisition and learning outcomes." (Save the Children, 2013)

The World Bank funded Save the Children to implement the Reading Ready project through the Results in Education for All Children Trust Fund, 2019-2021. The project was initiated in partnership with MINEDUC and the Global Digital Library and co-implemented by Save the Children. The project has worked on the capacity building of authors, illustrators, publishers and designers to create and digitize new books for pre-primary and translated books for lower primary. (Save the Children, 2024).

Several implementing organizations, including both local and international NGOs, play key roles in improving education in Rwanda by supporting the development and distribution of TLMs and their use in schools and communities. These include Save the Children, FHI 360, Chemonics International, World Vision, Education Development Trust, British Council, and AEGIS TRUST. Each contributes in unique ways to the enhancement of literacy and education. Among these, Save the Children stands out for its focus on training local talent in book development and mobilizing communities for book use, as one interviewee observed:

> "Save the Children doesn't develop titles, but we train people on this, we have expertise in-house, within Save the Children… Now we have got a big number of around 50 publishers in the country, and then we put them together, we provide training on title development, illustration, review or editing, and the process to develop the books."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

This quote highlights Save the Children's significant impact on the local publishing industry and literacy improvement. Moreover, Save the Children has implemented projects like ARR and its RCBI component, and USAID Mureke Dusome, aimed at creating quality children's books in Kinyarwanda and fostering school-community partnerships to boost literacy. Similarly, USAID Soma Umenye, implemented by Chemonics International, focused on early grade reading instruction and material distribution.

In collaboration with partners, World Vision has worked on Uburezi Iwacu to support literacy through the enhancement of community libraries and reading clubs. This intervention aims particularly at creating literacy-supportive environments in homes and communities, including for children with disabilities. In conjunction with the British Council and VSO, the Education Development Trust has implemented a project to develop and use Math and English materials for lower primary education, emphasizing professional development for teachers. Furthermore, Aegis Trust collaborates with REB on peace education, contributing content that promotes peace and other relevant values.

Collectively, the varied efforts of the implementing organizations have led to notable achievements in the processes of book development and use:

- Development of guidelines for leveling supplementary readers.
- Training for local publishers, writers, illustrators, and designers.
- Increased quantity, quality, and use of books.

- Mobilization of communities to support literacy activities.
- Improved learning outcomes, especially in Kinyarwanda.
- Increased parental involvement and support for children's reading.
- Enhanced availability and accessibility of books in schools, homes, and community libraries.

To achieve the common goals of improving the titles and content for primary school pupils in Rwanda, and promoting their use, title development and book use **project implementers operate in a strong synergy among themselves and with the government institutions in charge of education.** This collaboration helps them to leverage their diverse abilities, knowledge, expertise, networks, and resources, and to complement each other as well as avoid duplication.

Private Industry

Private industries include publishing companies, writers, illustrators, designers, printers and distributors. While they can be described collectively as title developers, each is also identifiable by their specialized focus. Among these is RCBO, a professional association that unites 17 members dedicated to creating and distributing quality children's books. Another is Education Development Consult, an organization that focuses on educational support activities including continuous professional development, training content, inclusive and play-based TLMs and book development, research, and assessment. Education Development Consult also works to support inclusive digital learning in literacy and education technology. The research team also learned about Master Consultancy and Editing Center, a publishing company that focuses on title development and translation and editing, reaching learners in nursery, primary and lower secondary school. Freelance writers, illustrators and designers collaborate with publishing companies and industries in title development, creating content that follows REB guidance, and sell it to publishing companies after it is validated by REB.

Private actors contribute to the BSC through content creation, illustration, design and production of titles, in collaboration with REB and other partners. They also contribute by distributing books to schools and/or selling them in bookshops. They also supply trade books to bookshops.

Describing the publishers' role and contribution, an RCBO representative explained:

> "… they are into the development of the titles, working with different authors, illustrators, or designers out there, and they are also disseminating, which is also part of the publishing process. For example, the Rwanda Children Book Organization board, tries to put one voice together

with all these children's book publishers to advocate for friendly policies for the development of books and the development of book use and accessibility to children's books for children and primary students across the country."

— Private industry actor

The quote underlines the importance of collective effort in developing titles that are meaningful and accessible, while also ensuring that the books themselves are widely available for educational purposes across Rwanda.

The collective effort for title development and book use has significantly increased the number of publishers and the variety and quality of available books. One key informant highlighted the growth of the industry:

"I remember ten years ago… there were like five to six children's books publishers but now we count like forty children's book publishers… in the past ten years we would count more than ten thousand books [published from children's book publishers while five years, ten years ago we could find twenty if not fifty maximum books."

— Private industry actor

The increase in children's books publishers reflects the positive impact of collaboration among publishers and partners on the children's books publishing landscape in Rwanda. The quote notes the rapid growth in the number of children's book publishers and the significant increase in the number of books published over the past decade. Other sources bolster this perspective, albeit with somewhat different figures. A Save the Children report on Advancing the Right to Read notes,

> "At programme inception in 2013, there were no local language books for children age 0-3, only a handful for pre-primary aged children, and less than 150 books targeted for P1-P3 students, most of which were poorly translated from other contexts. Furthermore, overall quality was poor and there were only 3 Rwandan publishers (only 1 with more than a few titles). By 2018, there were 27 Rwandan publishers producing high quality books for all ages, across a wide range (including fiction and non-fiction, concept, tactile, flip-flap, board books, etc.) and books that

meaningfully mainstream important gender and inclusion concepts." (Save the Children, 2018)

The increase in availability of Kinyarwanda-language books is undeniable. The Rwandan Basic Education Board's official list of approved supplementary books for use in schools, for example, contained 1,016 Kinyarwanda titles as of April 2024. Additional titles exist beyond this, which are not intended specifically for the school market. These sources show the achievement of the partnership in terms of improvement in the quantity and local language relevance of children's books over the last decade.

Stakeholders also reported an increase in the number of freelance writers and artists, as well as the increase of their importance within the Rwandan BSC:

"They bring stories. If that story has all the themes we need and is within the range we require, we accept it and give him/her money. But the contract starts when REB approves the book."

— Private industry actor

The specific nature of some of the development processes enables freelance writers, illustrators and designers to make their contribution through multiple partners and on multiple projects. As they are not permanent staff of the publishing companies, they are hired to work on a single assigned book. A private industry actor described their role:

"You cannot find money to pay a designer or an illustrator so that you retain him/her or the company to do so. They come to work for me like they go to work for another one (person). My contract concerns only that specific book I gave to them."

— Private industry actor

In addition, publishing companies are not responsible for training freelance writers, illustrators and designers. Rather, they identify training opportunities on their behalf:

"Actually, those illustrators and designers are trained by the institution that needs textbooks. We do not train them… most of the times Save the Children used to train the designers and illustrators. They come to our companies to look for a job."

— Private industry actor

This implies that **writers, illustrators, and designers are trained by the institutions that need their service in title development**. Publishing companies engage them only as needed.

Local education stakeholders

Local education stakeholders in this report include those at the school level and in the local community. School level actors include headteachers, directors of studies, teachers, librarians, and learners. These are sometimes supported in their roles by the district level supervisors, including directors of education. The role of the school level actors is the reception and management of books as well as ensuring their integration in teaching and learning activities. The local community actors include parents and caregivers as well as opinion leaders. Their role is mainly to encourage book use in the community libraries and at home.

At the school level, headteachers carry important responsibilities for book use, including proper management. These responsibilities extend to teachers and sometimes parents who benefit from school services (i.e., effective use and proper management of books is a responsibility shared by everyone who interacts with the books). Ultimately, however, when schools receive books from REB and other organizations, it is the school leader's responsibility to make sure that books are effectively managed and used in classrooms.

When books arrive at schools, there is a detailed process for receiving them:

"... the supplier brings those books, then the head teacher comes with a school stamp and signs the delivery note of the supplier. Once the head teacher takes them, there is a register at the

school where he/she records the books i.e., the kinds of books received, their titles, levels where they will be used… and he/she writes that information in that register."

— Government stakeholder

While it is part of the headteachers' responsibility to ensure books are used at the school level, interest in books is keenly monitored by local government officials. For instance, education authorities like the District Directors of Education (DDEs) also play a part in encouraging reading. One government actor said:

"When we go to the morning assembly, we talk to the children and encourage them to have the habit of reading and borrowing books for reading."

— Government stakeholder

DDEs' efforts have led to improvements in both book management and reading habits among students. One government actor reported that they have observed a positive change:

"Before awareness, books were kept badly. But today, you arrive at school, because they know that someone comes and looks at the Math books in P1, Kinyarwanda P1, and how they are borrowed you find that they are well kept… So, the school principal and the head of studies, because they know that they are being monitored, you find that the management of books has changed."

— Government stakeholder

One way that the school leaders ensure books are used is allowing the children to borrow them, including taking them to use at home. The involvement of parents is therefore crucial:

"We borrowed the book of social studies because he was not good at it. But now, according to the effort in reading that book, there is an improvement. They read in the evening, on weekends and on Sunday."

— Parent

However, some school staff members were evidently hesitant about the use of books at home and reported that managing these books can be challenging. A headteacher explained:

"We had a challenge because learners were taking them without returning them. Thus, some disappeared. I can say that we keep them in a store and bring them sometimes. To lend them to learners, we have a bookkeeper who is also a teaching staff member."

— School actor

Nevertheless, parents' committees play their role of monitoring book use and promoting a reading culture in schools. They encourage children to borrow and read books. Parents' input has resulted in significant improvements in the local reading culture, with book borrowing habits visibly growing in schools. One participant from a USAID-funded project noted the transformation in book utilization:

"Before, you could find books in the library without being used, some books could be packed in boxes, and others packed in sacks without being used. Both learners and teachers were not interested to go and borrow them, and the worst thing was that even the librarian could enjoy seeing all the books packed in the library rather than being lent to the learners. Learners now like reading and even during the break, most of them gather in the library to look for books to read."

— Staff member at an implementing organization

This participant's statement emphasizes the positive impact of the collaborative efforts at the school level and in the parents' awareness of the school provisions and their purpose. There is a clearly visible mark on the community's reading culture, evident in the significant improvements in accessing and using reading materials, thanks to the concerted efforts of various stakeholders.

The quotes above highlight the crucial role that schools play in promoting reading, and thus the use of books. The **schools benefit from collaboration with various partners, which ultimately leads to improved access to books among the students**.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TITLE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

Strong coordination toward national priorities

The first key characteristic of the Multilateral Partnerships for title development consists in all partners' willingness to respond to the educational priorities mandated by MINEDUC and REB in relation to curriculum development, teaching resources, and teacher management.

At the national level, MINEDUC coordinates all partner activities through the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). Within the ESWG there are smaller technical working groups and strategic oversight committees. These work alongside book resource management committees at the school and community levels. The organization, coordination, and management of the ESWG, sub-sector education working groups, technical working groups, and task forces are specified in the Rwanda Education Sector Working Group Operational Framework developed by MINEDUC and DPs to "...formalize their relationship." (MINEDUC, 2023b, 2)

Coordination within the ESWG allows different partners to work in synergy and align their individual contributions toward the national policies within the BSC. A study participant said:

> "The working group serves to coordinate, to know what is happening. For example, if there is a communique in the Ministry of Education to give to all development partners, it is very easy to pass it though WhatsApp platforms; if we have a meeting, we don't have to write… The development partners also organize webinars on different subjects which are announced on

> WhatsApp groups for any interested partner to attend. Once the World Bank organized a webinar on textbook use and I attended it."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

This quote confirms that various channels, including WhatsApp groups and other forums, were used to facilitate the coordination of education stakeholders in the area to share knowledge. Through these channels, stakeholders also enjoyed the benefit of linking their efforts and some capacity building. Coordination fostered a close-knit working relationship that ensured no conflict or duplication of interventions. The awareness of coordination benefits among the implementing partners is itself a significant characteristic:

> "We have been able to work together and we have different fora in which we meet especially when we are reporting about the progress of the program activities. We have what we call a strategic oversight committee… We meet on a quarterly basis and we discuss the progress on whatever activities we are doing and we most of the time get advice on how we can improve on some of the activities."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

In summary, **the coordination of MINEDUC through the ESWG has facilitated effective and efficient collaboration among all partners**, fostering continuous engagement and collective motivation regarding book-related matters.

Mutual complementarity among partners

Partners play crucial roles in title development and use through complementary actions, including funding and capacity-building. Development partners such as USAID, the World Bank, and the British Council support title development and use by funding either the government, NGOs, and/or community-based organizations to implement several initiatives. Partners like REB, Save the Children, the Imbuto Foundation, and World Vision train local publishers, illustrators, and designers to enhance their capacity and improve the quality of books developed in Rwanda. During this period, the initiative successfully trained approximately 154 local professionals, including publishers, authors, illustrators, editors, and booksellers (Save the Children, 2016). This training not only enhanced the skills and

expertise of these individuals but also contributed to the development of a robust local publishing ecosystem.

A participant from the private industrial sector highlighted the synergy achieved in building the capacity of local actors in title development. The participant focused on the various training sessions with organizations such as Save the Children, the Rwanda Education Board, and Boston University, focusing on textbook writing, illustration, designing, and inclusive publishing practices:

> "Yes, we had some training with Save the Children, some with Rwanda Education Board… some with a university from the UK, Boston University, that did training in collaboration with our organization on textbook writing, illustration, and designing. We did training with some editors on picture books. World Vision as well trains publishers on inclusion so that their books include all categories of children including those with disabilities."
>
> — Private industry actor

Partner complementarity has extended across both the public and private sectors, enhancing skills in critical areas like illustration and book development processes. REB further supports this initiative by producing textbooks through the In-House initiative, which is financed by the Government of Rwanda and supported by institutions such as UR, UNICEF, Soma Umenye, and others. This approach ensures that textbooks reflect local contexts, values, and cultures.

Development partners like USAID, the World Bank, and FCDO fund title development, showing their wide-reaching support for these efforts. Stakeholders also focus on promoting book use through campaigns and activities, with REB ensuring equitable book distribution across schools and supporting digital library access. Through the Umudugudu Mu Ishuri ("Village in school") project, a local leaders' initiative to mobilize people to take all the children of the village in school and support their education, and Uburezi Iwacu, partners collaborate in a comprehensive strategy to integrate educational values within the community, ensuring children's access to textbooks and schooling. Village in School aims to encourage the use of books at home and in community libraries. Its success depends on the cooperation and involvement of various actors, such as volunteers in reading clubs, parent peer support networks, community councils, village and zone leaders, and development partners:

> "The Village in School initiative means that in our village, children learn to read and write well at their early age. In our village, no child should drop out of school. In our village, children should use textbooks. In our village, no child should go to school without having lunch. The Village in the School is an approach to deliver messages related to education in general."
>
> — Government actor

Regarding engaging the community in educational support, a district education official said the following:

> "Uburezi Iwacu meets the population in villages, where it has selected peers including family friends, health advisors, the head of the village and the head of Isibo, known as Mutwarasibo. These are opinion leaders in the village. The organization trains them and explains their role in education, including encouraging parents to help their children with reading at home."
>
> — Government actor

The quotes highlight that **the collective actions and projects of partners have been instrumental in promoting book use and literacy awareness across communities.** These are successful collaborations that point to the importance of educational stakeholders and the REB fostering even greater complementarity among themselves.

Joint action in needs assessment and planning for title development

To develop titles that are responsive to stakeholders' needs, partners routinely conduct needs assessments, through which they identify actual needs and obtain feedback on previously developed TLMs. Needs assessments also support mutual collaboration between stakeholders and government institutions in complementing the government's top-down approach. Partners take the initiative in conducting needs assessment activities that inform MINEDUC's efforts. Thus, there exist some aspects of grassroots coordination and collaboration via the ESWG:

"We collect data through our monitoring, evaluation and learning team on a quarterly basis. We do it on a quarterly basis and once we have collected data and we identify a certain gap, we think of how we can address those issues identified. If we find that teachers need a material to use to build their capacity, then that is when we decide, now let us create this content and we start discussions with REB to show them this is what we are proposing, then if it is given a green light, then we go ahead with production."

— Implementing organization staff member

Another participant added the following:

"On preparing the title development guidelines, although we are leading the process, we are inviting other partners. I wish also to mention that we brought technical experts, but we also brought local people from MINEDUC, NESA, University of Rwanda, as well as other partners working in the area of literacy. … Since our product is for the government, we make sure that other partners like UNICEF, DFID/FCDO are part of our workshop. I also need to mention that we have just completed a social-emotional learning framework together with our partners – UNICEF, FCDO, VSO, World Vision. All of them came together so that the framework can then be for REB. So, we collaborate a lot and I believe one of the reasons why we have been succeeding is that collaboration."

— Implementing organization staff member

Therefore, **we found strong evidence that content and titles are developed in response to the curriculum needs or thematic trending areas.** This is a significant characteristic of the Partnerships as the thematic areas are determined by the country's National Transformation Strategy and the Foundation Learning Strategy.

NOTABLE IMPACTS OF THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Multilateral Partnerships have had a noteworthy impact on both title development and book use. In terms of **title development,** perceived impacts included:

1. Increased title quantities and number of book professionals
2. Improved contextual relevance of content
3. Initiated development of titles for children with special needs

Regarding **book use,** perceived impacts included:

4. Established district-wide system for monitoring book use
5. Improved book management systems
6. Increased book availability and accessibility
7. Improved final book users' motivation and appreciation of literacy

Impacts on title development

Increased title quantities and number of book professionals

The title development process involves multiple partners, with some contributing to title creation and others focusing on training book professionals such as writers and illustrators. Given the involvement of various actors, it is challenging to specify the exact quantity of titles developed. However, as one partner noted in describing their case, a significant number of titles have indeed been produced:

> "We don't develop titles or illustrations, but we train people. In this area, we have in-house expertise within [organization omitted for anonymity]. Currently, we have a large number—around 50 publishers in the country. What we do is bring them together and provide training on title development, illustration, review, editing, and the overall process of developing books. We only support people in producing them. …….. While we knew the number of titles we needed to distribute, I'm not confident in providing an exact figure for the total number of titles we've helped publishers develop, as there are many, and different projects produce varying numbers. So, I cannot tell, I would only assure you that they are many."
>
> — DP staff member

As highlighted by one respondent, Kinyarwanda has been the priority because more than 80% of learners were unable to meet the benchmark on the Kinyarwanda literacy test. This assessment was not well-received by the government. Therefore, the Literacy, Language, and Learning Initiative (L3), which

began as the first literacy project, became involved in producing a large number of Kinyarwanda titles. The outcome has been highly successful and appreciated by the government, to the point where partners were asked to extend their support to other subjects. One respondent mentioned:

> "In general, the government today can see and appreciate the support we are providing. The government has said, 'You have provided support in Kinyarwanda; why don't you extend it to English or other subjects?"
>
> — DP staff member

The L3 final report (2011-2017) (USAID, n.d.) emphasizes L3's support for Andika Rwanda, the national story writing and poetry competition in Kinyarwanda. This initiative led to the annual publication of 5,000 copies of Andika Rwanda books. In July 2013, L3 identified over 200 new and relevant Kinyarwanda titles from the Rwanda Education Board's (REB) approved list of supplementary materials for 2012-2014. The significant increase in the number of Kinyarwanda titles locally produced marks a major achievement of the partnerships.

Improved contextual relevance in title content

Some participants in our study reported significant improvements in the content of educational titles, which they attributed to the Partnership's prioritization of the local context and verified curriculum needs. Previously, textbooks developed outside Rwanda often highlighted the culture of other countries, sidelining Rwandan language, culture, history, and values. Respondents indicated that the government, DPs, and private industries have engaged in the development of story books in Kinyarwanda for early-grade literacy promotion that are context-relevant for all levels of education:

> "[During the] Mureke Dusome project, we produced the story books and textbooks that children can use in class and because of the distribution of the Kinyarwanda story books in lower primary, we actually ensured that every child has one book at least."
>
> — DP staff member

Current books also focus on promoting patriotism, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and Rwandan culture. They feature contemporary subjects like financial management, soft skills, environmental protection and climate change. Teachers and government representatives expressed pride in how current textbooks celebrate Rwanda's topography, history, and culture.

A government representative dwelt on the positive values taught by the more recently developed books:

> "The books we are developing are different from theirs. For us we develop books that are related to the curriculum …. We need to avoid books that contain genocide ideology and things like that. If we do not write books together, those book writing institutions have to arrange themselves and bring to us written books to check if they do not contain errors."
>
> — Government actor

The improved cultural relevance of titles is, evidently, an enabling factor in book use

Teachers noted that the inclusion of familiar names, places, and cultural references in the books greatly interests students, making learning more relatable and enjoyable. A teacher said:

> "As they are reading, they find Kigali, they find Kinigi, they find the names of their brothers and sisters. He's reading and then he finds the name 'Agasaro', then he's telling people at home, 'You know what, I was reading a certain book of science, and I found your name, Agasaro. They were saying [she was] a good girl.' Therefore, kids here, using home books, are really interested because they use the knowledge from the grassroots whereby children enjoy that knowledge so much rather than the old books where they could use hard words that were one; those words were hard and hard names at times. In English books, you find they are reading a story, there are unfamiliar names, countries, and places; but here now they are reading a story about Kinigi, how people visited the gorillas and what, they enjoy, 'Wow, we have been reading a story about our hills up there!' Even you find they are talking of a place whereby kids even know that place. Therefore, it makes them understand things very well. Therefore, these books are better compared to the previous books."
>
> — Teacher

The transition towards content creation by Rwandan experts, who are familiar with the local context and educational needs, has rendered learning materials more relevant and engaging for students. This has nurtured a deeper connection with the learners' heritage and environment. Besides this more general appeal, the Partnerships have also responded to the needs of a more specific group of learners — children with special needs.

Initiated development of titles for children with special needs

The Partnerships have contributed to the development of titles aimed at learners with disabilities. FGDs yielded evidence that children with special needs can freely access titles through various digital platforms such as the REB website. Other books can be accessed through applications like EDC-Soma.

Information about the availability of disability-sensitive books was corroborated in interviews with different groups. In an FGD with children, a child explained how children with special needs are able to read together with other children thanks to the Partnerships' response to their needs:

> "At home, we have brothers and sisters [with disabilities]… We all take books home. Sometimes you find he has a book with the same content as that one you have. I can tell one of my siblings, 'let me read a story for you.' Then, she can ask, 'how are you going to read the story since you cannot see?' Once we open a book to read, s/he asks whether we can read using dots typed on the paper. Once I open a book, she also opens her book. We read at the same time. Once she finds that what I read is true, then she feels happy. She told my parents 'I know how to read,' and my parents trust me with what I learn at school."
>
> — Student

The above quote reflects the role of multilateral partnerships in empowering sharing learning and connection among siblings demonstrating how reading together fosters trust and confidence, especially in the context of students with disabilities.

The investment was described in some detail by a representative of the private industry:

> "We also thought about children living with disabilities. So, we thought about how we can digitize those books and include sign language for learners who can only see but who can't hear, and audio for learners who can hear but who can't see. Afterwards, we developed a mobile app

called EDC-Soma. So, the mobile app has been developed and has been put in the Google Play store so that anyone with an Android device can download it and enjoy our books for free."

— Private industry actor

Participants' responses illustrate a step forward in supporting pupils with special needs. However, the availability of disability-sensitive books is not yet as widespread as titles for children without disabilities. In addition to that, not all children have access to digital technology. Therefore, more support is needed in this area.

Impacts related to book use

Established district-wide system for monitoring book use

The goal in provisioning books is to have target users utilize them as a learning resource. A practical means of identifying the extent of use is monitoring. NESA is mandated to monitor book resources at the school-level and within communities. To execute their mandate, monitoring teams have been established in each district to conduct routine inspections of availability, delivery, and use of books in schools.

Within each district, inspection is conducted by a permanent district inspector who works hand in hand with district and sector education officials. The inspection team provides feedback to schools, the district directorate of education, and REB on the status of books in different schools. The monitoring team tracks book utilization by learners at school and at home through reviewing the records of books borrowed from the school libraries:

"We monitor how books are borrowed… We consult where they register the people who borrowed the books and those who returned them. It is in this way that we get more information on how books are used or not."

— Government actor

During the interview, respondents reported that, following the monitoring visits, schools receive feedback that highlights areas of improvement whenever these are recognized. NESA's constructive

feedback aims to support schools in enhancing their educational practices and ensuring continuous improvement in terms of effective book use.

Improved book management

As a result of the Partnership's activities, the book management system in Rwanda's schools has been significantly improved. There are now staff members responsible for maintaining book records and overseeing daily library activities at schools. Schools currently possess cataloging systems, as confirmed by stakeholders involved in book resources monitoring. This is only part of the direct result of the school leaders' awareness of the role of NESA, which renders school-level book management systems very active and vigilant:

> "NESA has an inspection role. It inspects the implementation of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning materials. NESA goes to schools to see whether the delivered books are being used and books having some problems."
>
> — Government actor

During interviews, the stakeholders explained that when the monitors visit school libraries, they find active records detailing book borrowing and returning activities. They also observe signs of wear resulting from use. The regular visits, the purpose of which is clearly understood by the school level leaders, have become a motivating factor for the leaders to enhance book management practices, resulting in improved management of books at that level. This situation was confirmed by a DDE:

> "Before, books were badly kept. But today, because they know that someone comes and looks at how Math books in P1, and Kinyarwanda P1 are borrowed, you find that they are well kept… since they are monitored, management of books has improved."
>
> — Government actor

Our data shows that through regular monitoring of book use, especially at the school level, NESA has been instrumental in ensuring that the distributed books are utilized.

Improved book availability and accessibility

Owing to Partnership activities, the number and range of books available in the education system has recognizably increased, although there is still a shortfall in catering to the needs of all learners. Books are now more widely accessible, not only in schools but also at home and in the community libraries. Book availability has been affirmed by both parents and teachers in various FGDs:

> "True! There has been a significant change because in the past, children did not have the opportunity to have a book for self-study. They depended solely on materials provided by teachers. We now express gratitude to the government for investing in book production. While the quantity may not be sufficient yet, there are books available. It's a significant improvement that if a child wishes to borrow five books, they can obtain three of them, which is really a good thing. The journey is ongoing, and there is confidence that in the future, every child will have a book for each subject."
>
> — Parent

A teacher confirmed the reported improvement:

> "10 years ago, I wasn't a teacher, but from my observation, it was quite different. Back then, even when I was in school, children didn't have the chance to take books home. The books were typically for teachers and school leaders, not for the students to bring home. However, things have changed significantly now. Nowadays, you can see children heading home with not just one, but sometimes two books; one for stories and another for their subjects."
>
> — Teacher

This impact of Partnerships on availability and accessibility of books in schools and communities also contributed to improved reading motivation among children.

Enhanced reading motivation, attitudes, and outcomes

Study data provides evidence that the Partnerships have resulted in beneficial changes in attitude and behavior. Specifically, there has been a more positive attitude towards using books and an enhanced

motivation for reading. This is evidently the direct result of increased availability of contextually appropriate textbooks, coupled with support for their utilization both in the classroom and in the community. It has in turn contributed to enhanced reading practices and improved learning outcomes.

The observed enhancement is exemplified, for instance, in documented increases in reading proficiency. A 2017 learning achievement assessment revealed that 54.9% of P3 students demonstrated grade-level proficiency in Kinyarwanda. The projection for 2021 anticipated a rise to 63.3% (MINEDUC, 2018). In 2021, 68% of P3 learners met Kinyarwanda reading comprehension expectations (NESA, 2022). Interviews with teachers and FGDs with parents indicate that children are now achieving literacy at a younger age. The study suggests these gains can be attributed to the accessibility of books and the ongoing support for their use in both school and community. A parent described the positive changes:

> "I also see a change compared to the past 10 years. Before, children could reach in Primary 4 or Primary 5 without being able to read a paragraph, a proverb, or any type of a story in Kinyarwanda or in any other language. They would know vowels and consonants but could not read. But nowadays together with a very successful reading system and internet, they can read even before they reach primary school. So, there is a big change."
>
> — Parent

Parents and other education stakeholders reported that improvements in reading have contributed to behavior change and improved discipline. Children who read are inspired by the moral lessons and positive values depicted in story books. They are likely to use their time more efficiently. Discussions with parents and sector education inspectors show some of the positive reading behaviors they observed among students:

> "Children who like reading novels are more disciplined compared to those who don't read. This is because nowadays, in books, there are stories that have moral lessons that change the behaviors of the children. Even in the communities, you find that such children are exemplary in cleanliness, attending schools, protecting the environment, among others."
>
> — Government actor

In another instance, a parent emphasized the outcomes of children's use of textbooks. Drawing on a child's use of a science textbook, the parent described the learning gains demonstrated by a child:

> "The book of science is very much supportive. Somewhere they studied a unit about cleaning drinking water. Students were even given homework on that unit. It really changed their practices. She could tell me, 'Mommy, at school they have told us to do this, and sometimes I could see that the kid would do better than I do. I realized that she was correct and that the way I used to do it was not the right way."
>
> — Parent

The reading culture too has been enhanced due to increased access for users and their utilization of book resources at both the community and the school level. Teachers reported a notable positive shift at school, observable in children's curiosity and willingness to borrow books for reading during their free time:

> "In the past learners did not have any curiosity to borrow a book. They thought that books had only to be used in class but now learners are curious to read mainly if they find an interesting story or elements related to the course content."
>
> — Teacher

Data also suggests that parents' attitudes have changed positively. Additionally, respondents indicated that parents have developed a greater understanding of the importance of children reading. This parental support for children's reading and their interest has played a crucial role in enhancing reading motivation and fostering a positive reading culture. Parents have a greater recognition of the importance of book availability for their children to use beyond school, understanding that it is a child's right to have access to reading materials:

> "Before, parents did not take care of knowing what their children are studying at school but for now, parents are encouraged to come to the school library to borrow at least 4 or 5 books for their children to read at home and they have responded positively."
>
> — Parent

In interviews, teachers corroborated the views expressed by parents, confirming a rise in the number of parents visiting schools to borrow books. Additionally, parents actively contribute to promoting book use by purchasing or borrowing books and encouraging their children to read at home. This positive shift in attitude is attributed to ongoing familiarization with the importance of book use, conducted through the Partnerships for book use.

It is important to acknowledge that both the availability and the accessibility of books have been closely linked with the mobilization efforts of various stakeholders, which have been targeted towards enhancing reading motivation. This concerted effort has significantly contributed to the improvement of reading culture. The positive outcome of reading practices is evident in the development of positive behavior and discipline among students, which have in turn contributed to their overall attitudes towards learning.

RQ2: HOW AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS WERE THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED?

Interview data was useful for understanding the processes involved in the development of the Partnerships and their implementation as well as the conditions surrounding them. Altogether, six factors were identified to have enabled the formation and implementation of the Partnerships, including two strategic factors and four tactical factors.

In the category of strategic factors, namely those related to the process of establishing the overall goals of the BSC and planning how to achieve them, the research team identified:

1. MINEDUC's clearly articulated vision
2. MINEDUC and REB's coordination and oversight role

The tactical factors, namely the human, technical, and financial resources to achieve the strategic goals, included:

1. The utilization of working groups to strengthen collaboration around tile development and use activities
2. DPs' engagement of the government to facilitate implementation activities
3. DPs' collaboration among themselves
4. DPs carrying out needs assessments as a first step in engaging the government

STRATEGIC FACTORS

MINEDUC's clearly articulated vision

The vision of any institution serves as a guide and can be used to provide a sense of purpose. Without clear guidance, education partners cannot know the right direction for supporting title development and book use. In this regard, MINEDUC has developed Partnership guidelines that are in line with its vision. The Foundational Learning Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 informs MINEDUC's partners about government priorities, building on the foundation of a series of Education Sector Strategic Plans (MINEDUC, 2022). Strategic guidance has been a key factor in the conception, birth, and nurturing of the Multilateral Partnerships. One interviewee stressed the importance of the contribution:

> "... the Foundational Learning Strategy, like a guiding document for everyone who wants to invest in the system of education, this is the priority of the Ministry of Education in terms of education. This is the priority if you want to invest in it, look at this document. Teaching textbooks is a standalone outcome, learning material, textbook, techniques, standalone outcome, mobilization techniques… It is like a Bible, if you want to do something in education, around the foundation of learning, do this."
>
> — DP staff member

To support the achievement of education goals and outcomes in relation with title development and book use, all the partners collaborate with MINEDUC and REB to ensure they are informed and contribute to the government's priorities. This helps them align their interventions with the set vision,

goals, and priorities. The critical role of effective alignment with government priorities as an enabling factor is acknowledged among the development partners:

"We have to make sure that our vision is aligned with the government's vision, and I think it's the same vision with the MINEDUC. They want to improve quality education. Part of improving quality education is to make sure that children can have access to affordable teaching and learning materials. That is also our strategy, our vision. So, I haven't seen any kind of contradiction or divisions between the government approach in our approach. I think it's both, we have the same vision in terms of improving learning outcomes."

— DP staff member

The smooth and successful implementation of the Partnerships owes to its alignment with government priorities as stipulated in the Foundational Learning Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 that focuses on improving foundational skills in literacy and numeracy for all learners by creating an inclusive learning environment that supports diverse needs, including those of children with disabilities In particular, the strategy underscores the importance of high-quality, accessible teaching and learning materials, particularly books, as essential tools for fostering literacy and numeracy. These materials enhance student engagement, support skill development, equip teachers for effective instruction, and incorporate culturally relevant content, ultimately promoting equitable education for all learners, including those with disabilities. The reported increase in availability of books and enhanced access to them is a strong reflection on the Foundational Learning Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 goal of improving learning outcomes and reducing the student-book ratio to 1:1, especially after the shift to English as LOI. Guided by the Strategy, the Partnerships bring together like-minded collaborators who are not only cognizant and sensitive of the government priorities for education but also share a similar vision for improving the quality of the country's education:

"… if the curriculum is revised, this implies that realities have changed. There is a need to move in that angle. For example, we used to have Vision 2020 but right now we are in vision 2050. So, if we are going to revise or improve curriculum, we will need to include Vision 2050 in it. And you know curriculum and teaching materials must find solutions to the problems of society in general. The problems we had before are not the same as the ones we have today, so, we will need to write in that angle, be it in technology, be it ABCD… "

— Government actor

An actor from private industry confirmed the significance of the alignment:

> "Our priorities are aligned with the government. You can have better interventions, but which are not aligned with the government line and priorities. So, if you go there and you present it, no one can accept that intervention regardless of the budget that you have invested in. So, what contributed to our success is closely working with the government and making sure that whatever we are doing is contributing to the curriculum guidelines."
>
> — Private industry actor

To that effect, Partnerships in title development and book use initiated various projects to develop and distribute curriculum-aligned books to schools in the promotion of a reading culture among the learners. At community level the efforts have translated into the initiation of community libraries and reading clubs.

The study discovered that it is not enough for partners to actively engage within the framework of the MINEDUC vision or align their efforts and initiatives to complement and support MINEDUC's overarching goals and objectives. Their activities also have to be closely coordinated by MINEDUC to ensure the realization of synergy and maximize impact across all educational endeavors.

MINEDUC and REB strong coordination and oversight

MINEDUC coordinates Multilateral Partnerships through REB and NESA. Given its mandate as the coordinator, MINEDUC communicates with all partners at different levels of implementation. Efficient communication with partners supports MINEDUC's coordination. The mechanisms of coordination cascade from the national to the local levels. At national level, the coordination mechanism is grounded within the ESWG which is chaired by MINEDUC's Permanent Secretary and co-chaired by UNICEF.

To facilitate collaboration and coordination, all partners engaged in similar activities are further organized into smaller strategic forums, like technical working groups and strategic oversight committees. Further support is provided through RENCP. This arrangement is made not only to simplify the coordination of activities but also to foster a close-knit working relationship that provides insurance against conflict and duplication of the interventions:

> "If there is something that MINEDUC really has, it is to be fast in partnership developing… Whoever you ask, every partner, they will tell you that the coordination, the partnership between MINEDUC and DPs is good… we must coordinate, to know what is happening."
>
> — DP staff member

This quote stands in line with the description of the ESWG's structure, which states:

> "The ESWG structure allows coordination at policy, strategic and implementation levels. At the highest level, MINEDUC works closely with elected co-chair from educational development partner Organizations to oversee all ESWG activities by providing policy and strategic orientation for action." (MINEDUC, 2023b, 2)

By ensuring collaboration at the policy, strategic, and implementation levels, the ESWG structure enables the alignment of educational resources with national goals. This coordination allows for the selection and distribution of high-quality books and materials that meet curriculum standards, ensuring that educators have the resources they need to enhance teaching and learning. Moreover, involving education development partner organizations fosters a shared commitment to improving literacy outcomes, further emphasizing the critical role that well-structured educational materials play in achieving educational objectives.

TACTICAL FACTORS

Utilization of working groups to strengthen collaboration around title development and book use activities

Utilization of working groups has been a significant factor of implementation, not only in the coordination of activities but also in engaging partners in collaboration around title development and book use. One of the existing groups is the ESWG, which involves all education stakeholders. This platform helps all partners to learn about and understand each other's interventions, facilitate the mapping of DPs' interventions to avoid duplication, and collaborate to address the identified gaps or challenges. A development partner's representative presented a useful example of instances that are the typical subject of partners' queries:

"We have the draft version of the DPs' intervention and that is the purpose of this exercise. Number two was to coordinate and avoid duplication, like for example the Save the Children as DP is training in one district of teachers in physics education, World Vision is in that district training teachers in inclusive education when the other districts are doing nothing."

— DP actor

The ESWG's role is facilitated through communication and coordination channels that are easily accessed by partners. For instance, members communicate via their WhatsApp group besides regular meetings. In these forums, they share news, including their successes and challenges. The members appreciate the purpose and outcomes of the arrangement, and one representative described the convenience that partners enjoy under the arrangement:

"We have a WhatsApp group with ministers and all development partners where all the issues, communication, news are shared. For example if there is a communique in ministry to give to all development partners, it is very easy to pass it through WhatsApp platform. If we have a meeting, we don't have to write. I mean, it is very simple, education development has a quarterly meeting and we have a joint education meeting twice a year."

— DP actor

It is worth noting that, in addition to the ESWG and the noted use of WhatsApp, there are sub sector working groups such as the Basic Education Sub-Sector Working Group, which in turn has technical working groups, including the Curriculum and Textbooks Technical Working Group. These smaller forums facilitate more focused collaboration among partners involved in title development and related activities.

DPs' engagement of government to facilitate implementation activities

DPs engage MINEDUC, REB, and NESA throughout their project implementation activities. This helps to keep them on board and ensure that actors obtain advice and validation of their activities. Explaining how they supported implementation, an implementing organization's representative said:

> "Number one is collaboration with government agencies. I have cited REB and National Examination and School Inspection Authority and the Ministry of Education itself. This kind of collaboration and involving them throughout the processes has been very key. Because once they have had a hand in what we are developing, there can't be any push back. We have been able to work together, and we have different fora in which we meet especially when we are reporting about the progress of the program activities. We have what we call a strategic oversight committee… We meet on a quarterly basis and we discuss the progress on whatever activities we are doing and we most of the time get advice on how we can improve on some of the activities. We also have technical group working meetings, education sector group working meetings. All of those."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Not only DPs but also private industries recognize government engagement in their activities as a crucial factor. This, in their view, is a means for the government to have access to project partners and beneficiaries. Besides, it contributes to national priority alignment checks and approval of partners' activities.

A key informant representing an implementing organization pointed out how their organization planned to have a memorandum of understanding with REB to have prompt access to schools once they received funding:

> "One of the other strategies was to use the government and this also has been USAID's strategy in that whenever we invite participants, we don't invite them ourselves, but the government and REB invites them on our behalf."

— Implementing organization staff member

Similarly, private industry engages the government in their title development activities. One writer explained how they work in coordination with the government:

> "So, all I do as an author is write the script and propose the illustrations, but I also amend the mistakes in content that were spotted by REB and do some adjustments when requested. For example, when REB assesses the standard according to the level of the story, they might suggest some adjustment like increasing or decreasing the number of words, and I edit it accordingly."

— Private industry actor

Engagement of the government in their activities has been a crucial factor in moving the work of all the partners. It serves as a framework to ensure that each entity's endeavors align with the collective needs. This facilitates the successful achievement of a common goal through the promotion of coordination and synergy among all stakeholders.

Collaboration among partners

Collaboration in the Multilateral Partnerships does not exist only between the government and implementing partners. It is also evident among the partners themselves, including USAID, UNICEF, FCDO, World Bank, EU (European Union), and JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency), as well as locally-established organizations such as Save the Children and World Vision, and other implementing organizations. Most stakeholders believed that functional collaboration within the Partnerships is one of the critical factors to its success:

> "We have been concentrating on Kinyarwanda and other partners in other areas but we collaborate by sharing information, expertise, and also ensuring that we learn about what each other is doing."

— Implementing organization staff member

Different actors in title development and book use have collaborated and leveraged their dynamic strengths to deliver on key activities such as content development, developing guidelines, capacity building, awareness raising, and mobilization for book use at different levels:

> "In terms of training publishers, for example next month, Tunoze Gusoma-USAID will be collaborating with another USAID funded project called Uburezi Iwacu under World Vision. We are under FHI 360; we are going to train together because we have worked on the guidelines together. On the development of the guidelines, though we led the process, we invited other partners… We brought on board technical experts from MINEDUC, NESA, University of Rwanda as well and other partners working in the area of literacy."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Another implementing partner said:

> "We have been able to work together… we meet on a quarterly basis, and we discuss the progress on whatever activities we are doing and we most of the time get advice on how we can improve on some of the activities."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Partners confirmed that they work collaboratively to build capacity for the resources used in title development, irrespective of whether they belong to the public or private sector. Collaboration is acted out in key areas of title development processes, such as illustration, review, and editing. Those engaged in book use made some reference to their collaboration with other partners in training teachers and conducting community sensitization sessions where they interface with parents and other community stakeholders in promoting book use:

> "[Soma Umenye, Tunoze Gusoma, and Building Learning Foundations worked together] in training parents about their role in making children learn how to read and encouraging them to help children at home."

— Implementing organization staff member

This quote highlights the collaborative efforts of various initiatives, such as Soma Umenye, Tunoze Gusoma, and the Building Learning Foundations, in educating parents about their crucial role in fostering children's reading skills. It underscores the importance of parental involvement in the learning process and encourages parents to actively support their children's literacy development at home. This partnership reflects a holistic approach to education that recognizes the impact of family engagement on children's learning outcomes.

DPs carrying out needs assessments as a first step in engaging the government

All titles developed are aligned with the government priorities under the Foundational Learning Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 and the recognized learning needs stipulated in the CBC launched in 2015. Recognizing these priorities, and working through in-house production, education partners like EDT, Save the Children, British Council, RCBO, eKitabu, and REB developed titles in response to the curriculum needs or thematic trending areas determined by the country's National Strategy for Transformation (NST 1).

To develop titles that are responsive to stakeholders' needs, a routine needs assessment is conducted to obtain feedback on existing materials before proceeding with development. Interview data provided some evidence of the usefulness of the needs assessment:

> "The key issue identified was that publishers were not interested in producing children's books because there was no market. You know that producers are business-oriented people, contrary to NGOs (key education partners). Therefore, development partners collaborate with publishers, writers, illustrators, and designers to ensure that they receive enough training to produce quality and age-appropriate books for children. Development partners also support them to get approval from the Rwanda Education Board. Furthermore, development partners buy those books produced and then proceed with their distribution to different schools, community libraries, and reading clubs across the country to ensure that books are available even in very remote areas because initially, the problem was the inequality of getting books."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Partners reported that the data is usually generated through consultation as well as monitoring and evaluation activities involving teachers, learners, and authors prior to or after content development. Publishers and writers also work closely with REB to assess needs and design the interventions:

> "We collect data through our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team on a quarterly basis. During the collection of data, once we identify a certain gap, we think on how to address the identified gap. For example, if we find that teachers need material to use for their capacity building, we decide to create this content and we start discussions with REB to show them what we propose, then when we agree on it, we go ahead with production."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Another partner asserted the importance of the needs assessment function:

> "We conduct consultations and surveys with different book development sector players like the publishers and REB to ensure that we get all the challenges that are in this sector of book production and how we can fix them. When we decide together what the solution can be, all of us together decide to create a book leveling guide that REB is going to approve before its production and use. The decision to change or to come up with anything new is made in collaboration with all the players in the book industry, so that we know we are solving the existing problem, and we are solving it with the right solution."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Our data illustrates the importance of conducting needs assessments prior to engaging with the government. This is not simply a part of the collaborative approach to implementing the Partnerships. It also plays a crucial role in facilitating partners' success in addressing identifiable gaps, as it supports title development and paves way for effective use.

RQ3: WHAT CHALLENGES WERE OBSERVED AND ADDRESSED DURING THE PROCESS OF CARRYING OUT THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS? WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS REQUIRED?

CHALLENGES OBSERVED AND ADDRESSED DURING THE PARTNERSHIPS

Multiple challenges were identified in this study, some of a primary nature and directly linked to the Multilateral Partnerships for title development and book use and others of a more secondary character that did not impact the implementation of the Partnerships.

Primary and direct challenges were recognizably linked to the roles of the partners:

1. Tensions resulting from the differing expectations regarding intellectual property
2. Tardiness in review and approval processes

Secondary challenges did not necessarily impact the Partnerships themselves or partners' collective efforts although they affected their individual initiatives for title development and book use:

1. The abrupt change in the LOI
2. The sudden change in the school curriculum
3. Book management and loss

Tension and differing expectations regarding intellectual property

Respondents, mainly those from private industry, expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that titles developed under the Partnerships had to be owned by REB and could carry no acknowledgement of partners' contributions. This policy differs from the previous practice, where authors retained the copyright of their titles and all stakeholders involved in title development were acknowledged. However, in 2017, REB initiated in-house book production and bought the copyright of all titles used in schools. Respondents confirmed some tension because they believe their right to authorship was taken away from them:

"… REB does not write, it uses other people from outside, if it took those books and being considered as its property/own while they were developed by those people and even their names never appear on the books. It is not good. I was one of the members who contributed a lot [of content] being put in the books to be used in the schools and finally REB calls it its property, it is a lack of acknowledgement of the role… contribution played by other people in the production of those books being used in schools… we were not acknowledged."

— Implementing organization staff member

The negative sentiments and reported demotivation stand in contrast to the positive climate of effective coordination and collaborative effort. REB's aim in acquiring the copyright of textbooks is to make them accessible for learners and teachers for free. While this policy is supportive of learners, and was thus welcomed by teachers and parents, REB encountered substantial resistance from other stakeholders involved in title development and publishing. Stakeholders claim that REB's policy caused them to lose their biggest market, namely schools.

A further cause of mistrust are writers' reports of the theft of titles during the process of review and approval:

"Yeah, it happened to me once! I wrote a story, and I gave it to the publisher, I won't say his name, and that publisher told me that they don't need my story, little did I know that he made a copy, which he soon published under the name of another writer without me knowing, and because I still had the story, I gave it to another publisher and when we went to REB to ask for approval, they told us that they had approved a similar story from another author."

— Private industry actor

The expressed dissatisfaction over copyright and basic ownership rights, and the resultant mistrust among the partners, was a major challenge for the Partnerships. Notable strategies adopted to mitigate this challenge have been sharing copyrights for different types of books and developing alternative ways of publishing.

REB has taken the responsibility of developing textbooks through an in-house production initiative or through DPs' support, retaining the copyright of titles. Private industry partners are left with the responsibility of developing storybooks:

"REB holds textbooks. For storybooks, we do hold the copyright."

— Private industry actor

Once the storybooks are approved, REB buys those they need and others can be bought by DPs. For instance, World Vision has purchased storybooks for community libraries while Save the Children bought a number of Kinyarwanda titles for the Mureke Dusome project.

Some private partners have started thinking of how they can join hands with REB and produce some of their stories under the Creative Commons License besides uploading them on the REB website:

"Recently, because we want to keep working with REB and [build] relationships, we have started to think on how we can put some of our titles in the Creative Commons License. For example, we have it on their website."

— Private industry actor

New publication arrangements will grant users easy access to the private industry's titles, facilitating use by schools, students, and parents while maintaining the industry's partnership with REB.

Slow review and approval process

The slow review and approval of titles has been identified as a significant barrier to the Partnerships in title development, especially between REB and publishers or individual writers. Typically, activities related to title development, such as content creation and language choices, are determined by agreements between authors and publishers. Publishers may issue calls for title development, to which writers respond, or writers may independently suggest titles for development. Regardless of the approach, all titles must undergo approval by REB.

Freelance authors and publishers reported that this approval process is often sluggish and protracted:

"There are many challenges. One, is that the process is very expensive, to be honest. So, the process is very expensive and the consultants that we are using, whatever the people, need to be paid. So, two, is that developing the book from special needs assessment up to its completion and approval (by REB) takes long to the extent that you may be tired and leave it and don't stay focused."

— Private industry actor

The possibility of a writer's abandonment of a project, out of frustration over delays, threatens potential loss of interest among the writers and diminished quality in titles, among other losses. The authority of approval is vested only in REB, which determines the length of the processes without much consideration of consequences:

"The writer prepares the script leaving space for illustration. Then he gives it to the publisher to evaluate it, and after that they give it to the illustrators to draw in the pictures. Then the publishing house takes the storybook to REB which also assesses it and approves it, and then the story gets published. So, all I do as an author is to write the script and propose the illustrations, but I also amend the mistakes in content that were spotted by REB and do some adjustments when requested. For example, when REB assesses the standard according to the level of the story, they might suggest some adjustments like increasing or decreasing the number of words, and I edit it accordingly."

— Private industry actor

The reported delay does not only affect the timely publication and ultimate utilization of titles. It also impacts Partnerships, especially when publishers fail to adhere to contractual obligations or honor their agreements with their clients.

One solution to review and approval delays has been to bring together all partners involved in title development to work in teams of writers, illustrators, designers, reviewers, and approvers:

"...so, when publishers and illustrators and all these people in the book production are seated with the approver…they start to develop titles in the presence of those and then they keep giving them feedback in the same sitting. Then they interact on the book production until the title is developed with all the feedback… when the book is completed, REB is going to immediately approve it because they have been involved in the process of production. They know what the child needs, they know what the quality means, and then they give them feedback."

— Implementing organization staff member

REB's collaboration with partners over collective title development has facilitated timely approval of numerous titles. This diminishes the threat of abandonment of projects.

Abrupt changes in the LOI

According to various participants, the most significant challenge affecting the BSC over the last 10 years has been the change in LOI from French to Kinyarwanda and finally to English. Its effect is tremendous because title development and use are deeply connected to LOI:

"The Ministry of Education makes some mistakes when producing books, and REB also takes part in it because they change programmes very often, especially the LOI."

— Teacher

Participants noted that every time the LOI policy changed there was a need to develop new titles or adapt existing ones within a very short time. Short timelines for content development led to backlogs in production and contributed to compromised quality in the content of new titles. In discussions with teachers and NGO representatives, participants cited examples of how, in some instances, authors just directly translated content from Kinyarwanda or French into English:

> "At the very beginning of this year, we started developing materials in Kinyarwanda for lower primary and when we shifted to English medium, it is like direct translation from Kinyarwanda to English especially for Mathematics. So that one really affected the content. Because you can't say you are translating directly from one language to another and claim that you developed content. So, this time around, for example we were told that for lower primary we have developed wrong instructions – confusing learners, with few illustrations and REB is now working to accommodate all these changes with the support from World Bank. So, the World Bank is supporting to re-develop materials using easy instructions, adding more illustrations to make those books more user friendly for kids of lower primary."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

In another instance, more evidence came up of writers working under pressure to meet deadlines because of the changes in LOI:

> "But something negative I have told you, it's that we wrote them in a hurry. The time was not enough. Being not enough of course when you write something in a hurry, there are things you find yourself that you would have improved if you had had enough time. That's the one thing which was negative about writing these in-house books."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Data indicates that the abrupt changes in LOI affected the work and plans of partners in title development largely by compromising the quality of their work. This necessitated an urgent response to address the emerging need of new titles in the new LOI while providing quality content.

The immediate solution to the abrupt changes in LOI consisted of translating existing books into the new LOI. Some respondents reported that it was done as an emergency measure. However, it posed the very important issue of poor quality. Imperfections resulting from the hurried work in mass translation called for extra content review processes.

Sudden change in the school curriculum

The change from KBC to CBC in 2015 called for the urgent development of new textbooks:

> "KBC had its own books and when CBC started, books changed too but the most obvious problem in KBC books is the scarcity of exercises… in the CBC, the textbook provides learners with instructions for a task."
>
> — Teacher

CBC brought about a change in the procurement and distribution approach as a response to address content and methodology gaps. Previously, publishers could develop and distribute textbooks directly to schools, an approach that changed with the introduction of CBC. However, documentation available on BSC shows that:

> "Due to several challenges, the approach of *contracting* publishers to provide schools with CBC-compliant textbooks was not successful, hence, the government opted for the in-house textbook production initiative."
>
> — Kagina, 2023

REB's in-house production was initiated in part to mitigate the shortage of appropriate textbooks for CBC. Some DPs supported REB by developing and distributing CBC books, especially for Mathematics and English for lower primary. According to a study participant, there was an effort to supply books specialized to the teachers' and learners' instructional needs:

> "We have those materials that teachers can use but we also have those that learners can use as they practice mathematics. So, for pupils we have those pupil-activity books as some of the materials learners can be able to manipulate as they do some mathematical activities."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Documented sources also point to this development:

> "In 2019 REB, in partnership with the British Council under the Building Learning Foundation (BLF) initiative, acquired 115 copyrights from publishers that enabled in-house editing and alignment of textbooks to the CBC. The first copies of these textbooks were printed and delivered to schools starting from fiscal year 2020/21."
>
> — Kagina, 2023

Our data suggests that in-house production and the collaboration between REB and different partners, especially DPs, contributed to the availability of titles aligned with the new curriculum.

Textbook mishandling, poor management, and loss of books

Another challenge experienced by the Partnerships was the mismanagement of books at schools and homes. Teachers noted that borrowed books were often lost or damaged.

To address this challenge, REB recommended the establishment of book management committees at the district, community, and school levels. Committees not only routinely monitor book use but have also instituted measures to curb book mismanagement. Other measures have included awareness campaigns to promote proper book handling by different partners.

REB, in collaboration with World Vision and other partners, has established mechanisms to guarantee the appropriate management of books in school libraries and community libraries. At schools, libraries and book resources are managed and supervised by the book management resources committees. In communities, book management is run by volunteers. School libraries are open to students, who can borrow and use the books at home, while community libraries are open to all community members. As a way of ensuring continuous book use, learners and their parents are encouraged to access community libraries during out-of-school days.

An NGO representative described the motivation for the establishment of community libraries:

> "… After we purchase books from the publishers that we supported in book production, we distribute them to different community libraries, and reading clubs across the country to ensure that books are available in the communities. Initially, the distribution of books was not fair.

> Majority of books were available in towns, and in high-income families, then with distribution we've realized that it was a fair business to ensure that books also go in the community that are hard to reach, in very remote areas whereby every community has a community library."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

Despite the persisting challenges in book management, the strategy has had a positive impact, especially on improving reading culture. REB and DPs noted that, because of the Partnership's work, access and utilization of book resources had improved at the school and community levels. The teachers we interviewed noted that students were curious to read and routinely borrowed books for reading during their free time at school. This was corroborated by stakeholders engaged in book resource monitoring, who observed that libraries have active catalogs of book borrowings and returns, and that books show signs of wear as a result of constant use.

School leaders are also innovating strategies to manage book resources within their means. One approach involves engaging school personnel to facilitate book borrowing. Another strategy entails the establishment of book management committees. School committees typically comprise the head teacher as the president, along with the Director of Studies, a secretary, the president of the parent committee, the village chief, and other key figures within communities:

> "If a student misplaces a book, it is not the responsibility of the teacher or head teacher to personally pursue the student for its return. Instead, this duty falls to the school committee, whose role is to facilitate the recovery of lost books. The committee may engage with parents to either purchase a replacement for the lost book or provide guidance on how to procure a replacement."
>
> — School actor

Book management strategies ensure the efficient use of books at school and in the community. Specifically, they minimize book damage and loss.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR THE SUCCESS OF MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS IN TITLE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

Funding for title development

Partners in title development expressed the shortage of funds to produce and distribute more titles, which impacted the quantity of new titles published and distributed to schools. Consequently, the Partnerships for title development have not fully achieved their objective of reducing the student-textbook ratio. Funding challenges are more particularly felt in the post COVID-19 period, as available books cannot meet the increasing demand created by the additional new satellite schools. A government official highlighted the need for additional funding:

> "All in all, challenges are about financial issues. If we have enough funds, I mean if we get enough budget, we will be able to print out many books so that we reach the target of one book per student."
>
> — Government actor

Partners echoed the official's input:

> "The main challenge is the funding; books are still needed but the available titles in the hand of the child are way too little. We still need more funding to cover the books needed in schools."
>
> — Implementing organization staff member

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and,

> "When we have little funding, we go for a small scale. When we have larger funding, we go for a larger scale. It changes now and then depending on the funding, like with the reading ready project that we implemented with funding from the World Bank, we only covered three to five

districts because the budget was little. But then with USAID-Tunoze Gusoma we are covering all the 30 districts in Rwanda because the funding is huge. It keeps changing."

— Implementing organization staff member

Our data suggests that funding is perceived to be the most critical factor of successful implementation of the Partnerships. Partners understand success to be, primarily, the attainment of MINEDUC's stipulated pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1. In this regard, further studies on procurement, production and distribution related issues would bring additional insights, informing the government and its partners on what material investments are necessary and how the investment should be implemented.

Support in printing

Printing is very expensive and the Rwandan book industry is not well-structured. Locally-based printers have not demonstrated sufficient capacity to handle the printing needs of the entire education system, and international printing is much more expensive. Rwanda's education system is advancing faster than the available book production and supply capacity can support it.

The printing sector in Rwanda encounters pricing challenges, as companies tend to set high prices for their services. Cost factors are crucial in determining the industry's functioning and competitiveness. Our data indicates that BSC partners need to provide support for alleviating the costs of printing:

"When you go for people who are printing, they have high prices, and when you negotiate the price with our clients, they're also putting the price down."

— Private industry actor

Besides alleviating the printing costs, support is needed for expanding printers' capacity. While printers are willing to take on textbook projects, they are not equipped to meet the demand in a time-sensitive manner:

"Production and mass printing is a challenge. When we have a big number of textbooks to be produced, we have a challenge of getting a printing company that can produce them within the

time limit that we have set for ourselves. Most of the time they give [a] time, but they don't comply. So we keep on extending, extending, extending. This means the printing companies don't have that capacity."

— Private industry actor

Resolving issues in textbook production and printing can guarantee timely access to educational materials for students. Ultimately, this can bolster education quality and learning achievements.

Additional support for developing books for children with disability

Although institutions like the Council of Disability, Humanity Inclusion, and UNICEF invest in developing inclusive books, outputs are far from satisfactory. Efforts include developing digital libraries or printing braille books. However, most of these efforts are still in the pilot phase or cover only a few titles:

"Generally, REB does not produce books for visually impaired learners. Teachers struggle to prepare notes and the school helps by printing them in braille. That handout in braille is considered as a book by the learners. The handout is a result of the teacher's documentation from various resources for learners to have enough activities. Honestly, we don't receive any learner's book (from REB) made for visually impaired learners for them to have full access and use it."

— Teacher

This quote highlights the need for support in developing materials for visually impaired learners. Official provision of braille materials will minimize the teachers' and whole schools' struggle to prepare notes and print them in braille.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Multilateral Partnerships have been pivotal in enhancing Rwanda's BSC, particularly in title development and book use, under the leadership and coordination of MINEDUC and REB. Partnerships span government agencies, DPs, the private sector, schools, and local communities, each playing a distinct role. Notable impacts include improved book availability and accessibility, the development of titles for children with disabilities, and the fostering of a reading culture. The Partnerships are characterized by strong coordination, mutual complementarity, joint action, and alignment with national education priorities. The Partnerships' success highlights the critical role of collaborative efforts in improving TLMs.

Primary challenges to the Partnerships include tensions over intellectual property rights and the slow review and approval processes. Secondary challenges include abrupt changes in the LOI, the major change in curriculum orientation, and poor book management systems at the school and community levels. While some challenges have been addressed, the Partnerships still face considerable issues. Funding is required to support developers and printers and reach the envisioned pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1. Support is also required to develop quality materials for children with disabilities. Although the study did not directly address the planning, procurement, and distribution stages of the book supply chain, interviews and discussions highlighted these areas as significant challenges, particularly in relation to government budget planning.

To build on these findings, further research could focus on several key areas: examining how government budget allocations impact the efficiency of book supply chains, evaluating current procurement strategies and their effectiveness, assessing the distribution challenges faced in government-supported systems, and comparing book supply chain management practices across different governmental frameworks. Additionally, a longitudinal study could track how shifts in budgetary policies affect supply chain performance over time. Investigating stakeholder collaboration and developing policy recommendations to improve procurement and distribution processes are also essential to addressing the identified challenges and enhancing the overall efficacy of book supply chains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT

1. **Develop a national BSC partnership framework** that supports the Foundational Learning Strategy in outlining clear BSC partner roles and objectives, promoting dialogue and planning between all partners (including local communities), and improving communication of national education goals, all under MINEDUC and REB's guidance.

   Findings show that MINEDUC and REB have been effective in rallying partners around the goal of ensuring Rwandan children have access to quality books. However, there have been extreme cases of government authorities failing to communicate the government's education goals to partners, as was the case when the LOI and the curriculum changed. We recommend that the government should develop and promote a national BSC framework that institutionalizes partners' roles and promotes interpartner dialogue through communication platforms that improve upon the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), Rwanda Reads/Soma Rwanda, the Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (RENCP), and other technology-aided communication channels that enable partner coordination. The improved communication platforms should involve local community organizations, including representatives from schools, reading clubs, community libraries, and parent organizations as they are the last-mile implementers of reading policies.

2. **Improve NESA's on-the-ground monitoring and evaluation** of book needs, distribution, and use to keep book-related data up to date, promote the use of books in schools, and promptly identify book needs to reach the government's 1:1 student-book goal.

   NESA has been pivotal in inspecting schools to ensure they meet educational standards and norms. NESA examines infrastructure quality, teaching practices, and the use of textbooks in classrooms. Its on-the-ground supervision has motivated many schools and headteachers to improve the availability of books and their effective use. However, Rwanda is still behind in its goal towards the 1:1 student-book ratio envisioned by government planning partly due to the lack of precise and up-to-date data on on-the-ground book needs. To reach that goal, we recommend that the Rwandan government should build upon NESA's current reach to improve its school supervision and MEL data gathering capacities.

3. **Establish fairer intellectual property agreements with REB** that acknowledge and motivate the collaboration of writers, artists, designers, and partner organizations, particularly from the private sector.

Develop transparent and fair intellectual property agreements that recognize and acknowledge the contributions of all partners, especially private industry actors. To address discrepancies and mistrust arising from differing expectations regarding intellectual property, clear agreements will ensure that all contributors feel valued and are fairly recognized. This approach can help maintain motivation and trust among partners, fostering a more collaborative environment. We also recommend REB to continue being open to Creative Common Licenses and online publishing, as both methods can improve the availability of titles and secure partner motivation and trust in the government leadership over the BSC Partnership.

These agreements should acknowledge and reward the contributions of all individual collaborators—such as printers, writers, illustrators, and artists—by recognizing their roles in title credits and exploring options for shared copyright ownership or revenue participation. This approach not only secures the dedication of local creators but also promotes sustainable and equitable partnerships in title development.

4. **Streamline title review and approval processes** by involving REB representatives in title development and production and establishing in-house approval committees.

   Private partners have highlighted problems with the slow review and approval processes of titles by REB, which can lead to frustration and potential abandonment of projects. To address this, there is a need for a more efficient and timely review and approval process for new titles. This can be achieved by involving writers, illustrators, reviewers, publishers, and approvers in the titles' validation and approval process. Bringing all stakeholders together in collaborative workshops will facilitate real-time feedback, reducing delays and enhancing the quality and timeliness of published titles.

5. **Create an interpartner sustainability plan** that secures government funding for public and private title development and printing, editorial capacity building, local community participation, and the production of resources for students with disabilities.

   A government-led sustainability plan should explore innovative financing mechanisms that include input from donor agencies, the government, and private sector partners. Gathering all those resources together should aim at improving existing book management infrastructure and creating new mass printing centers. Sustainability cannot be properly achieved without on-the-ground stakeholder adoption of educational initiatives. Thus, a new sustainability plan should seek to provide funding for local stakeholders, especially in rural areas, to promote educational initiatives. Expanding Community Mobile Libraries (CMLs) can encourage community-driven reading activities and support schools and local organizations in managing

books, community libraries, and literacy clubs. They can also serve as hubs for workshops and exchanges of best practices on the role of books in children's learning, their management, and utilization. CMLs can also help to increase awareness of the need for accessible digital textbooks and technology for children with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER PARTNERS

6. **Promote interpartner complementarity** to assist partners' needs by sharing book usage and needs metrics, lessons learned, capacity strengthening activities, and other useful resources.

   Partners should continue playing an active role in strengthening their collaboration independently of but always advocating for government support. DPs and partners like USAID, Save the Children, and the Imbuto Foundation have shown the fruitfulness in building local actor capacity in book publishing, illustration, design, etc. collaboratively. Partner collaboration has also proven effective in a synergy in rooting educational values within communities, especially the use of books and the importance of literacy. Strengthened interpartner complementarity can provide partners with required resources the need arises, especially in times of unexpected risks, like sudden changes in educational policy or a global pandemic. Interpartner complementarity should also include small local organizations and promote their capacity strengthening.

7. **Advocate for public and private funding and development of material for students with disabilities** and use available funding to adapt current titles to digital audio platforms and braille prints.

   In conjunction with our recommendation to the government to create an interpartner sustainability plan that includes a budget for inclusive TLM, we also recommend non-governmental partners to advocate for funding that is specifically spent in the development and distribution of TLM for students with disabilities. We recommend partners make the most out of REB's openness to use Creative Commons Licenses and online publishing, as both measures give partners a platform for publishing current titles in audio formats. In their budgets and their requests for funding, partners should also identify how much money they need for audio recording and braille printing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER LMICs

Rwandan Partnerships offer valuable insights and actionable strategies for LMICs seeking to replicate Rwanda's success in improving their book supply chain. Below are our recommendations for adapting Rwanda's improvement strategy in other countries:

8. **Align all BSC government and partner efforts with national educational priorities** by strengthening the leadership, coordination, and oversight capacities of the Ministry of Education.

   Rwanda's success is chiefly due to MINEDUC's leadership. MINEDUC's coordination ensures that partnership efforts align with national education priorities by affording collaboration platforms and overseeing stakeholder activities. Other countries should adopt similar approaches by aligning stakeholder initiatives with educational goals and priorities and establishing a central coordination body to unify efforts across different education interventions.

9. **Build centralized, diverse, and well-planned BSC partnerships** that leverage collaboration from all sectors of society, from international development partners to local communities and libraries.

   Rwanda's partnerships include government agencies, local and international development partners, communities, and private sector actors. In other contexts, partnerships should engage a diverse range of stakeholders to leverage their expertise, resources, and perspectives, all essential for comprehensive title development and book use. Partnership plans should clearly define the roles and strengths of each partner to better guide them toward the achievement of national educational goals.

10. **Integrate locally-developed content within the national BSC strategy** by promoting local capacity building and the participation of local stakeholders in partners activities and communication channels.

    A standout aspect of Rwanda's approach was its emphasis on local content development, supported by training and capacity building for local authors, illustrators, and publishers. Partnerships in other countries should prioritize developing locally relevant educational materials that reflect their culture, values, and languages. This involves investing in training programs to enhance local talent and ensuring that content aligns with the curriculum and educational standards.

11. **Boost community engagement and literacy programs** that encourage the use of books and promote the value of literacy beyond schools and classrooms.

    Rwanda's partnerships benefited from the active involvement of local communities and schools in promoting book use, highlighting the importance of grassroots engagement in fostering a reading culture. In other countries, partnerships should consider developing community-based programs that encourage reading and literacy, such as community libraries and reading clubs. These programs can play a crucial role in engaging parents, teachers, and community members, thereby supporting children's literacy development beyond the classroom.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE AND RECOMMENDATION TO CONDUCT THE LIBROS STUDY



UNIVERSITY of RWANDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OFFICE

Rukara, 13th March, 2023
Ref: 03/DRI-CE/044(a)/ EN/gi/2023

Prof. Alphonse Uworwabayeho (PI),
School of Education
UR-CE

RE: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR YOUR STUDY

Following your application for ethical clearance of your research entitled: "**Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS),"**

Having reviewed your application and being satisfied with your protocol (research topic, data collection schedule, and informed consent), your study is ethically acceptable. This ethical clearance shall last for twelve months (12 months); and is renewable upon request and presentation of the progress report to the UR-CE Research Screening and Ethics Clearance Committee (RSEC-C) through the Research and Innovation Unit. Kindly note that you will have to apply for ethical clearance before making changes in the protocol during the implementation phase. The Research and Innovation Unit shall receive a final copy of your research report.

We wish you success in your study.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY of RWANDA
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UNIVERSITY of RWANDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OFFICE

Rukara, 13th March, 2023
Ref: 03/DRI-CE/044(b)/ EN/gi/2023

A letter of recommendation for the study on "Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS)"

To whom it may concern,

The University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) is in collaboration with the Supporting Holistic and Actionable Research in Education (SHARE). This SHARE is a cooperative agreement between USAID and the University of Notre Dame (UND) of the United States, with the aim of advancing global education learning priorities to provide quality learning opportunities and outcomes to all children supported by USAID. Under this collaboration, **Professor Alphonse Uworwabayeho and his research team** are conducting research entitled: "**Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS)**". This research will involve individuals from REB, MINEDUC, NGOSs, INDUSTRY, and SCHOOLs (selected country-wide) engaged in developing, producing and using textbooks and trade books for primary education in Rwanda.

Thus, on behalf of the UR-CE, I am pleased to introduce this research team and request permission on their behalf to collect data for this study.

We appreciate your cooperation in advance.

Yours sincerely,

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY of RWANDA
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION UNIT

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Director of Research and Innovation Unit
Tel.: 250788308862
Email: ndabagav@yahoo.ie
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Cc:

- The Principal,
- Dean, School of Education,
- HoD, ECPE

ANNEX 2 : CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

Learning To Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) — Rwanda

Assent form for a focus group discussion

PI: Alphonse Uworwabayeho, Ph.D.

About this consent form

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation study. This consent form will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to document the Book Supply Chain strategies Rwanda has recently used and what impacts this strategy has generated. Also, we seek to investigate factors behind the title development and book use in order to identify supportive implementation conditions.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are one of the users of books in Rwanda and thus a key stakeholder in the Rwanda Book Supply Chain.

The study is being conducted by the University of Rwanda, Resilient Africa Network (RAN) and the University of Notre Dame. The study is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Taking part in this study is voluntary

You may choose not to take part in the study or may choose to leave the discussion at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to leave the discussion later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your academic standing, or relationship with anyone, not even the University of Rwanda. Your participation is not a part of your academic or program requirement. As an alternative to participating in the study, you may choose not to take part.

How many people will take part?

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 76 participants taking part in this study.

What will happen during the focus group discussion?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a Focus Group Discussion, which will last approximately 45 minutes. The FGD will be composed of ….. People who are also students. During

the discussion, I am going to give you information and invite you to participate in a focus group discussion with your other fellow students on matters related to the Learning to Improve Book Resources in Rwanda (LIBROS) project. We will ask you questions about the Book Supply Chain and especially on book use in Rwanda. The type of questions includes open-ended and closed questionnaires related to book use. If you agree, our team will audio record the discussion so we can prepare typewritten notes afterward.

What are the risks of taking part in the study?

There is a risk that you might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions. At any point during the discussion, you can tell us that you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer a particular question. You can stop participating in the interview at any time.

There is a small chance that you may be identified based on the quotes you provide during the interview. We would like to ask for your permission to use quotes that you may provide during the interview. Your name will not be shown.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in the study?

We don't expect you to receive any benefit from taking part in this study, but we hope to learn more about things that can improve book use among students in Rwanda.

How will my information be protected?

The research team will be careful in ensuring your personal information is kept confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. No information which could identify you will be shared in publications about this study.

If you agree, we will audio record this conversation to review your responses and record them anonymously in our database. If names or other identifying information is found in the audio recordings it will not be added to our study notes. The audio recording from the interview and transcription files will be saved on an encrypted cloud-based folder on Google Drive for 3 years after the end of the data collection.

Will my information be used for research in the future?

Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Will I be paid for participation?

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Who should I reach out to with questions or problems?

For questions about the study, please feel free to reach out to the research team member administering this consent form. You can also contact Dr. Alphonse Uworwabayeho through email uwalufonsi@gmail.com or 0788576566.

Participant's assent

In consideration of all the above, I give my assent to participate in this research study. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Printed Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____**Date**:_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date**:_____

Learning To Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) — Rwanda

Consent Form for a Key Informant interview

PI: Alphonse Uworwabayeho, Ph.D.

About this consent form

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation study. This consent form will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to document the Book supply chain strengthening strategy Rwanda has recently used and what impacts this strategy has generated. Also, we seek to investigate factors behind the development and uptake of this strategy in order to identify supportive implementation conditions.

You were selected as a possible participant because you were identified as a key stakeholder in the Rwanda Book Supply Chain.

The study is being conducted by the University of Rwanda, University of Notre Dame, and the Resilient Africa Network (RAN). The study is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Taking part in this study is voluntary

You may choose not to take part in the study or may choose to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to leave the study later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your employment, or relationship with The University of Rwanda. Your participation is not a part of your work or program requirement. As an alternative to participating in the study, you may choose not to take part

How many people will take part?

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 76 participants taking part in this study.

What will happen during the semi-structured interview?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview, which will last approximately 90 minutes. During this interview, we will ask you questions about the Book Supply Chain in Rwanda. The type of questions includes open-ended and closed questionnaires related to the

study theme and your area of expertise. If you agree, our team will audio record the activity so we can prepare typewritten notes afterward.

What are the risks of taking part in the study?

There is a risk that you might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions. At any point during the semi-structured interview, you can tell us that you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer a particular question. You can stop participating in the interview at any time.

There is a small chance that you may be identified based on the quotes you provide during the interview. We would like to ask for your permission to use quotes that you may provide during the interview. Your name will not be shown.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in the study?

We don't expect you to receive any benefit from taking part in this study, but we hope to talk about the Books supply chain, specifically Title development and book use in Rwanda.

How will my information be protected?

The research team will be careful in ensuring your personal information is kept confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. No information which could identify you will be shared in publications about this study.

If you agree, we will audio record this conversation to review your responses and record them anonymously in our database. If names or other identifying information is found in the audio recordings it will not be added to our study notes. The audio recording from the interview and transcription files will be saved on an encrypted cloud-based folder on Google Drive for 3 years after the end of the data collection.

Will my information be used for research in the future?

Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Will I be paid for participation?

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Who should I reach out to with questions or problems?

For questions about the study, please feel free to reach out to the research team member administering this consent form. You can also contact Dr. Alphonse Uworwabayeho through uwalufonsi@gmail.com or 0788576566.

Participant's consent

In consideration of all the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Printed Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____**Date**:____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:_____ **Date**: _____

ANNEX 3: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

SEMI-STRUCTURED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL — DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS/DONORS

Date:	Start time:
Moderator:	Note-taker:
Region/Location:	District:
Organization:	Position:
Name:	
Sex:	End time:

Introduction

Read the informed consent form. If the participant does not consent, thank them for their time and end the interview. If the participant consents, continue with the introduction:

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. My name is <name of interviewer>, and this is <name of note taker>. We are researchers from the University of Rwanda who are here on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US-based University of Notre Dame to learn more about the book supply chain in Rwanda.

We invite you to this study because you are an essential stakeholder in Rwanda's book supply chain. We want to hear your work and thoughts about title development and using textbooks and trade books for primary education in the last ten years.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Let's start by discussing your organization's support of book provision in Rwanda.

- **How is your organization involved in book development and promoting book usage for primary school students?**
    - Book development means creating book content, including translating or versioning content for new languages and contexts.
    - Book usage means how students and teachers use books for classroom instruction or independent reading practice.
- How long has your organization been involved in book-related work?
    - If 10+ years, ask the respondent to focus their answer on the last 10 years
- **Is your organization's work related to (a) textbooks, (b) trade books, or (c) both?**
    - Trade books are books published for a general audience and available through publishers and bookstores, such as story books, picture books, and novels.

SECTION 2: TITLE DEVELOPMENT

Now let's discuss your organization's involvement with book title development.

Theme 1: Development & Implementation

- What activities does your organization conduct for title development?
    - Production of new titles?
    - Production of text, illustrations, or other design features?
    - Train authors, illustrators, or designers?
- (If producing new titles) Approximately how many titles does your organization produce per year?
    - For what audiences?
    - What is the size of your backlist?
- Do you receive external funding for these activities, or are they all covered by internal funding?
- How does your organization make decisions about what titles to produce?
    - Market research?
    - Discussions with the government, schools, or others?
- Do you work with the Ministry/REB to make decisions about title development? If so, how?
- Has your organization's work on title development changed over time? Why?
    - Increased or decreased development/production?
    - Any other notable changes? staffing? rules? goals? funding? etc
- How does your organization's work on title development compare to other entities in Rwanda?

- Similarities or differences compared to:
    - national/international NGOs such as Save the Children,
    - government/REB
    - international donors such as USAID, or
    - publishers

Theme 2: Impacts and Good Practices

Now, I will ask you some questions about your organization's impact on title development.
(Important)

- **What effect has your organization had on title development for primary schools in Rwanda? Any change made because of your organization's work? Examples?**

    - Changes in the quality of the story, illustrations, design
    - Changes in language(s) used for books
    - Changes in physical quality of books - papers, binding, etc
    - Changes in the quantity of books produced
    - Changes in the process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books
    - Changes in guidelines for making primary-level titles

- Were there any entities or groups impacted by your organization's work on title development? How were they affected? Examples?

  (Very Important)
- **How would you evaluate your organization's impact on title development in Rwanda more generally?**
  (Very Important)

- **If positive, what factors contributed to its positive impact?**
    - Factors related to goal setting and process management?
        - Top management support, commitment, or leadership
        - Existence of a long-term vision or plan for growth
        - Existence of strategic planning such as government guidelines, risk and need assessment, coordination, implementation plans, etc.
    - Factors related to human, technical, and financial resources?
        - Previous experience in developing primary-level books
        - Skilled, experienced, and committed staff

- Institutional support for continued staff training and capacity building
- Trusted and collaborative partnership among supply chain stakeholders
- Constant and open communications among stakeholders
- Modern information technologies
- Funding

(Very Important)

- **We learned that in Rwanda, various organizations are developing book titles or supporting the development of those titles. How would you compare the titles developed or supported by your organization to titles produced by others?**

    - Similarities and differences?
        - Types of books? - textbooks, trade books
        - Target audience/readers
        - Quality of story, illustrations, design
        - Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
        - Gender, disability, and ethnic representation
        - Curriculum adherence
        - Language used
        - Quantity produced
        - Physical quality of books - papers, binding, etc
        - Process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

(Very Important)

- **What factors does your organization prioritize for title development? How do those prioritizations compare to what the government or private publishers prioritize?**

    - Similarities and differences?
        - Government supervision/quality control/regulation
        - Types of books? - textbooks, trade books
        - Target audience/readers
        - Quality of story, illustrations, design
        - Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
        - Gender, disability, and ethnic representation
        - Curriculum adherence
        - Language used
        - Quantity produced
        - Physical quality of books- papers, binding, etc.

- The process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

(Very Important - Only ask if the respondent produces textbooks)

- **We learned that some years ago, the government, through Rwanda Basic Education Board and MINEDUC, launched an "in-house textbook production" initiative and took over textbook production and copyrights from private contractors.**

    - Can you tell us whether and how this initiative affected your organization's work and role in textbook development? Any notable changes?
    - How would you evaluate the overall effectiveness of this in-house textbook production initiative…?
        - on quality textbook production,
        - on time and,
        - at competitive prices in primary schools in Rwanda?

Theme 3: Challenges and Recommendations

Now I will ask about challenges your organization might have experienced in developing titles.

- What parts of your organization's title development are the most challenging and why?
    - For textbooks?
    - For trade books?
- If you were to develop textbooks or trade books for primary education, (1) How would textbooks' content, pacing, and/or structure be different from current textbooks? (2) How would trade books differ from currently available trade books?
- Compared to your ideal textbooks and trade books, what problems do you see in books currently developed in Rwanda? Think of content, production process, and organization involved.
    - For textbooks?
    - For trade books?
    - What do you think causes these issues?

- What needs to happen to improve title development in Rwanda in general?

Theme 4: Interactions with Other Entities

(Important)

- **Does your organization interact directly or indirectly with other entities for title development? Who are they?**
    - Government entities?
    - National or International NGOs?
    - Other donors?
    - The publishing industry?
- How and in what areas does your organization interact or collaborate with other entities? Try to focus on areas you interact with for title development.
    - Market research?
    - Content?
    - Production of new titles?
    - Production of text, illustrations, or other design features?
    - Train authors, illustrators, or designers?
    - Give or receive funds for title development? From whom, for whom?
    - Anything else?
- How do these interactions affect your organization's title development? Positive, negative, or neutral? Example?
    - Government supervision/quality control/regulation
    - Types of books? - textbooks, trade books
    - Target audience/readers
    - Quality of story, illustrations, design
    - Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
    - Gender, disability, and ethnic representation
    - Curriculum adherence
    - Language used
    - Quantity produced
    - Physical quality of books- papers, binding, etc.
    - The process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

SECTION 3: BOOK USE

Now let's discuss your organization's work on promoting book use among students, parents, and teachers.

Theme 1: Development & Implementation

- How would you evaluate the current reading culture among average primary school children and teachers in Rwanda? If weak, why do you think that is happening?
- Do your organization conduct any activities to promote book use? Any specific examples?
    - Train system administrators and/or teachers in effective book use

        - Support parents for effective book use
        - Work with community organizations to promote book use etc
- Do these activities differ for textbooks and trade books?
- When did your organization initiate these activities, and why? What goals did your organization intend to achieve through these activities?
- How are your organization's book-use activities implemented?
    - Who else was involved or collaborated on these activities? In what capacity?
    - (If involved) How did teachers, principals, parents, or children respond?
    - What roles did teachers, school administrators, and parents play in your activities?
- Has your organization's involvement in book use changed over time? Why?
    - Increased or decreased involvement?
    - Any other notable changes? staffing? rules? goals? funding? Etc.

Theme 2: Impacts and Good Practices

Now, I will ask you some questions about the impact of your organization's work on book use.

(Important)

- **What are the biggest successes you've had around increasing book use and reading among primary school children and teachers? Any change made because of your organization's work?**
    - Changes among children (learning)?
    - Changes among teachers (teaching effectiveness)?
    - Changes at the school level (school climate)?
    - Changes among parents or communities etc.?

(Important)

- **What factors contributed to your success?**

    - Factors related to goal setting and process management such as:
        - Top management support, commitment, or leadership
        - Existence of a long-term vision or plan for growth etc
    - Factors related to human, technical, and financial resources
        - Funding
        - Providing children and teachers with books they like
        - Previous experience in promoting book use among children and adults
        - Skilled, experienced, and committed staff
        - Institutional support for continued staff training and capacity building
        - Effective communications with stakeholders - parents, teachers, etc

Theme 3: Challenges and Recommendations

Now I will ask about challenges to the book use work you described.

- What are the biggest challenges you see in increasing book use and reading among primary school children and teachers?
- What strategies do you think would be most effective long term to promote book use and reading at home and school, for textbooks and/or trade books?
- Who or what are the most critical gatekeepers/obstacles to promoting or restricting book use and reading at home and school?

Theme 4: Interactions with Other Entities (Important)

- **Does your organization interact directly or indirectly with other entities to promote book use? Who are they?**
    - Government entities?
    - National or International NGOs?
    - Other donors?
    - The publishing industry?
- How and in what areas does your organization interact or collaborate with other entities in book use?
    - Does your organization…?
        - receive or fund projects for book use?
        - provide guidelines to the industry on book use?
        - partner with national/international NGOs to promote book use?
        - Anything else?
- How do these interactions affect book use? Positive, negative, or neutral? Example?
    - Impacts on…?
        - Children's learning?
        - Teachers' performance?
        - Reading-related school climate?
        - Or reading related home and community environments etc.?

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

- Do you have further comments you would like to share with me in conclusion?
- Now, that brings us to the end of our conversation. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me.

SEMI-STRUCTURED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL — INDUSTRY

Date:	Start time:
Moderator:	Note-taker:
Company:	Position/occupation:
Name:	
Sex:	End time:

INTRODUCTION

Read the informed consent form. If the participant does not consent, thank them for the time and end the interview. If the participant consents, continue with the introduction:

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. My name is <name of interviewer>, and this is <name of note taker>. We are researchers from the University of Rwanda who are here on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US-based University of Notre Dame to learn more about the book supply chain in Rwanda.

We are inviting you to this study because you are an important stakeholder in Rwanda's book supply chain. We want to hear your work and thoughts about title development and the use of textbooks and trade books for primary education in the last ten years.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?"

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Let's start by discussing your organization's support of book provision in Rwanda.

1. **How is your organization involved in book development for primary school students?**
    1. Book development means creating book content, including translating or versioning content for new languages and contexts
2. How long has your organization been involved in book-related work?
    2. If 10+ years, ask the respondent to focus their answer on the last 10 years

3. **Is your organization's work related to (a) textbooks, (b) trade books, or (c) both?**
    3. Trade books are books published for a general audience and available through publishers and bookstores, such as story books, picture books, and novels.

SECTION 2: TITLE DEVELOPMENT

Now let's discuss your organization's involvement with book title development.

Theme 1: Development & Implementation

4. What activities does your organization conduct for title development?
    1. Production of new titles?
    2. Production of text, illustrations, or other design features?
    3. Train authors, illustrators, or designers?
5. (If producing new titles) Approximately how many titles does your organization produce per year?
    1. For what audiences?
    2. What is the size of your backlist?
6. Do you receive external funding for these activities, or are they all covered by internal funding?
7. How does your organization make decisions about what titles to produce?
    1. Market research?
    2. Discussions with the government, schools, or others?
8. Do you work with the Ministry/REB to make decisions about title development? If so, how?
9. Has your organization's work on title development changed over time? Why?
    1. Increased or decreased development/production?
    2. Any other notable changes? staffing? rules? goals? funding? etc
10. How does your organization's work on title development compare to other entities in Rwanda?
    1. Similarities or differences compared to:
        - national/international NGOs such as Save the Children,
        - government/REB
        - international donors such as USAID, or
        - other publishers

Theme 2: Impacts and Good Practices

Now, I will ask you some questions about your organization's impact on title development.

(Important)

11. **What effect has your organization had on title development for primary schools in Rwanda? Any change made because of your organization's work? Examples?**
    1. Changes in the quality of the story, illustrations, design
    2. Changes in language(s) used for books
    3. Changes in physical quality of books - papers, binding, etc
    4. Changes in the quantity of books produced
    5. Changes in the process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books
    6. Changes in guidelines for making primary-level titles

12. Were there any entities or groups impacted by your organization's work on title development? How were they affected? Examples?
    (Very Important)
13. **How would you evaluate your organization's impact on title development in Rwanda more generally?**
    (Very Important)
15. **If positive, what factors contributed to its positive impact?**

    1. Factors related to goal setting and process management?
        - Top management support, commitment, or leadership
        - Existence of a long-term vision or plan for growth
        - Existence of strategic planning such as government guidelines, risk and need assessment, coordination, implementation plans, etc.
    2. Factors related to human, technical, and financial resources?
        - Previous experience in developing primary-level books
        - Skilled, experienced, and committed staff
        - Institutional support for continued staff training and capacity building
        - Trusted and collaborative partnership among supply chain stakeholders
        - Constant and open communications among stakeholders
        - Modern information technologies
        - Funding

    (Very Important)
15. **We learned that in Rwanda, various organizations are developing book titles or supporting the development of those titles. How would you compare the titles developed or supported by your organization to titles produced by others?**
    1. Similarities and differences?
        - Types of books? - **textbooks, trade books**
        - Target audience/readers

- Quality of story, illustrations, design
- Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
- Gender, disability, and social classes, unity representation
- Curriculum adherence
- Language used
- Quantity produced
- Physical quality of books - papers, binding, etc
- Process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

(Very Important)

16. **What factors does your organization prioritize for title development? How do those prioritizations compare to what the government or other private publishers prioritize?**
    1. Similarities and differences?
        - Government supervision/quality control/regulation
        - Types of books? - textbooks, trade books
        - Target audience/readers
        - Quality of story, illustrations, design
        - Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
        - Gender, disability, and ethnic representation
        - Curriculum adherence
        - Language used
        - Quantity produced
        - Physical quality of books- papers, binding, etc.
        - The process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

(Very Important - Only ask if the respondent produces textbooks)

17. **We learned that some years ago, the government, through Rwanda Basic Education Board and MINEDUC, launched an "in-house textbook production" initiative and took over textbook production and copyrights from private contractors.**

    1. Can you tell us whether and how this initiative affected your organization's work and role in textbook development? Any notable changes?
    2. How would you evaluate the overall effectiveness of this in-house textbook production initiative…?
        - on quality textbook production,
        - on time and,

- at competitive prices in primary schools in Rwanda?

Theme 3: Challenges and Recommendations

Now I will ask about challenges your organization might have experienced in developing titles.

18. What parts of your organization's title development are the most challenging and why?
    1. For textbooks?
    2. For trade books?

19. If you were to develop textbooks or trade books for primary education, (1) How would textbooks' content, pacing, and/or structure be different from current textbooks? (2) How would trade books differ from currently available trade books?
20. Compared to your ideal textbooks and trade books, what problems do you see in books currently developed in Rwanda? Think of content, production process, and organization involved.
    1. For textbooks?
    2. For trade books?
    3. What do you think causes these issues?
21. What needs to happen to improve title development in Rwanda in general?

Theme 4: Interactions with Other Entities

(Important)

22. **Does your organization interact directly or indirectly with other entities for title development? Who are they?**
    1. Government entities?
    2. National or International NGOs?
    3. Foreign donors?
    4. Other publishers?
23. How and in what areas does your organization interact or collaborate with other entities? Try to focus on areas you interact with for <u>title development.</u>
    1. Market research?
    2. Content?
    3. Production of new titles?
    4. Production of text, illustrations, or other design features?
    5. Train authors, illustrators, or designers?

6. Give or receive funds for title development? From whom, for whom?
7. Anything else?

24. How do these interactions affect your organization's title development? Positive, negative, or neutral? Example?
    1. Government supervision/quality control/regulation
    2. Types of books? - textbooks, trade books
    3. Target audience/readers
    4. Quality of story, illustrations, design
    5. Level of contextualization for Rwandan children
    6. Gender, disability, and ethnic representation
    7. Curriculum adherence
    8. Language used
    9. Quantity produced
    10. Physical quality of books- papers, binding, etc.
    11. The process of making titles - where, who, and how to produce books

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

23. Do you have further comments you would like to share with me in conclusion?

Now, that brings us to the end of our conversation. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me.

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOL — PARENTS

Date:	Start time:
Moderator:	Note-taker:
Region/Location:	District:
Children's School:	
End Time:	

Participant ID	Sex	Level of education	Occupation

INTRODUCTION

Read the informed consent form. If a participant does not consent, thank them for their time and dismiss them from the FGD room. For all participants who consent, continue with the introduction: *(do not read this aloud to the participants)*

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. My name is <name of interviewer>, and this is <name of note taker>. We are researchers from the University of Rwanda who are conducting a study on Learning to Improve the Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) in collaboration with Resilient Africa Network and the US-based University of Notre Dame to learn more about the book supply chain in Rwanda. This study is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

We want to speak with you because parents know how children use books at home the best. We want to use what we learn from you today to make more books in the future that children like so they have better learning outcomes.

Your participation is voluntary. Our conversation will take about 30 to 45 minutes. During our conversation, you are free to withdraw from the discussion anytime for any reason.
My role will be to facilitate the discussion. You will notice that my colleague, _____, will be taking notes. People often say very useful things in these discussions and we want to make sure we don't miss any of the important ideas you will provide! So you will probably see [note taker's name] writing quickly!
We are also recording the discussion so that we can complete our notes for analysis, but the recording will not be shared with members outside of the team assigned to this research. No information which could identify you outside of this research team.
Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?"

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

First, tell me about you and your family.

1. How many children do you have? What are their ages and grade levels?
    1. *If the parent/guardian has children older or younger than primary school age, emphasize that their answers should focus only on their primary school children.*
2. What kind of school(s) do your children attend? Public? Private?

SECTION 2: TITLE DEVELOPMENT

Now let's talk about books your childrens' book use at home.

3. Tell me about your child's book use at home.
   Probe for;
   Does your child read at home? Yes No
   Which books?

(Important)

4. **If no to Q3, tell us why not.**
    1. There is no book.
    1. There is no place to read at home.
    2. The child doesn't like reading.
    3. The child can't read yet
    4. The child doesn't have time to read (e.g., responsible for housework) etc.

(Important)

5. **If no to Q3, what do you do when your child doesn't read at home?**

(Important)

6. **If yes to Q3, tell us more about it.**
    5. What do they read?
    6. How often do they read?
    7. When and where do they read?
    8. Who do they read with?
        - Siblings, parents, or someone else in the family
    9. What do they read for? etc.
        - For study/homework, for pleasure, for helping siblings or others read, etc.

(Important)

7. **What books do you have for your child at home?**
    1. **What kinds? -** Textbooks or other trade books such as story books; picture books; classic children's literature; fairytales & folklore; fiction; biography, etc.
    2. **Where did you get those books?**
8. Does your child talk about things they read with you or someone in your family? Can you give an example?

(Important)

9. **Do you know your child's favorite book? Why does your child like that book?**

(Important)

10. **In the past couple years (not exceeding 10 years), have you bought any books for your child? Yes No**

    If yes
    1. What kinds?
    2. Where did you buy them? At what cost?
    3. What motivated you to do so?
    4. Why did you choose that/those particular books?

(Important)

11. **If yes to Q10, what do you think of the quality and variety of books available for your children in shops?**
    1. Content - age appropriateness, context relevance, curriculum adherence

2. Language used
3. Physical integrity or quality of the product
4. Publisher/author etc

(Important)

12. **What would be the ideal book that you would want to buy for your child? Is anything like this available?**
    1. **How do you choose books for your children? What affects your decision?**
        - Price or cost
        - Content - age appropriateness, context relevance, curriculum adherence
        - Language used
        - Physical integrity or quality of the product
        - Publisher/author etc

(Important)

13. **How easy/difficult is it to get the book you would want to buy for your child? Why?**
    1. I can't afford those books. Too expensive
    2. I have not seen those books anywhere even if I tried to buy them
    3. There is no place nearby that sells such books
    4. There are such books but they are in a language my child and myself do not understand, etc.

SECTION 3: BOOK USE

(Important)

14. **Have you seen your child's school textbooks? If yes, what do you think about the quality of those textbooks? What do you dis/like about them?**
    1. Content - age appropriateness, context relevance, curriculum adherence
    2. Language used
    3. Physical integrity or quality of the product etc
15. Have you ever taken your child to any book/reading event?

    (Important)

16. **Do your child or children of your child's age today read more or less than children 10 years ago? If there has been a change in book use, what factors have led to the change?**
    1. The quantity of books available?
    2. Types of books read?
    3. Reading motivation? Or frequency?

4. Reading purposes? — reading to study school subjects, reading for fun?
5. Parents' or adults' support or investment in buying books for children? Etc.

17. What are the biggest successes that you've had around increasing book use and reading at home and at school?
18. What are the biggest challenges you see to increasing book use and reading at home and at school?
19. Who or what do you see as the most important gatekeepers/obstacles to promoting or restricting book use and reading at home and at school?
20. Are you aware of any activities to promote book use by the government, NGOs, schools or other community groups? How have these activities impacted your child's book use, or the book use of other children, if at all?
    1. Have any organizations visited your child's school or community to promote book use?
21. What strategies do you think would be most effective long term to promote book use and reading at home and at school, for textbooks and/or trade books?
    1. Who should be involved?
    2. What can each of them do to help?

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

22. Do you have further comments that you would like to share with me in conclusion?

Now, that brings to the end of our conversation. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me.

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOL — STUDENTS

Date:	Start time:
Moderator:	Note-taker:
Region/Location:	District:
School:	
School ownership:	
School	
End Time:	

Participant ID	Sex	Age	Class/grade	Boarding/day scholar?

INTRODUCTION

Read the informed consent form. If the participant does not consent, thank them for their time and end the interview. If the participant consents, continue with the introduction:

"Hello < child name >. "Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. My name is <name of interviewer>, and this is <name of note taker>. We are researchers from the University of Rwanda who are conducting a study on Learning to Improve the Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) in collaboration with ResilientAfrica Network and the US-based University of Notre Dame to learn more about the book supply chain in Rwanda. This study is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

. We want to learn how and what kinds of books you read at home and school. We want to learn this from you because we want to make recommendations of books that you and children of your age will enjoy reading in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. I want to talk to you for about 30 minutes. During our conversation, you can tell us to stop at any time for any reason. There will be no punishment. Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?"

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

First, tell me about you.

1. What grade are you in?
2. Do you have siblings? How many?
3. What's your favorite subject in school? Why?

SECTION 2: TITLE DEVELOPMENT

Now let's talk about the books that you have at home.

2.1 At Home

4. Do you have any books at home? What books do you have?
    1. Probe: What kinds? How many?
        - Textbooks
        - Other trade books such as the bible; story books; picture books; classic children's literature; fairytales & folklore; fiction; biography, etc.

    (Important)
5. **Where did they come from?**
    1. Probe: Did someone give or buy it for you? – parents, other adults, siblings, friends, etc

    (Follow-up question selection)
6. **How often do you read the books you have at home?**

*** If the child never reads at home, ask the question below and go to ***Q11** after that.

(Important)

<u>Is there any reason you don't read at home?</u>

1. Probe:
    - Can't read/Don't know how to read
    - Don't have time to read
    - Don't like reading etc

7. What do you use the books for?
    1. Probe:
        - Reading for study
        - Reading for fun
        - Reading to my siblings, etc.
8. When you read, how do you know you understand what you are reading about?
9. Do you talk about things you read with family or friends? In which circumstances?
   (Important)
10. **What do you think of the books you have at home?**
    1. **What's your favorite book? Why do you like that book?**
    2. **What's your least favorite book? Why is that?**
11. *(Re-start here) Are there any books that you want to have at home, but don't have? Which ones? Why are they important to you?
    (Important)
12. **How do you feel about reading?**
13. Do your parents or someone in your family read to you or encourage you to read? How do you feel about that? How do you respond?

2.2 At School

Now let's talk about the books that you have at school.

14. Do you have textbooks to use at school? How many? Do you have to share them with friends?
15. Do the teachers at school use textbooks in their lessons with you? How do the teachers use the textbooks?
    1. Probe:
        - Reading during the lesson
        - Class activities
        - Assignment after the lesson etc

    (Important)
16. **Do you use the textbooks on your own? What do you use them for?**
    1. Probe:
        - Reading during the lesson
        - Reading before/after the lesson for independent study or homework
        - Reading to friends, etc.

    (Important)
17. **What do you think of the textbooks at your school? What is your favorite and least favorite textbook? Why?**
18. Do your teachers or other adults in your school encourage you to use textbooks?
19. Do you have any books apart from textbooks at your school?

1. Probe: What kinds? How many?
    - Story books; picture books; classic children's literature; fairytales & folklore; fiction; biography, etc.
2. Probe: Where?
    - School library
    - Classroom library, etc.

(Important)

3. **Probe: Do you use the books (not textbooks) at your school? How do you use them? How often?**
    - Reading during the lesson
    - Reading before/after the lesson for independent study or homework
    - Reading for fun, etc.

*** If the child never reads any books, ask the question below and go to Q21 after that.

(Important)

Is there any reason you don't read the books in your school?

4. Probe:
    - Can't read/Don't know how to read
    - Don't have time to read
    - Don't like reading
    - There is no book I like
    - I am not allowed to use them on my own etc

20. What do you think of the books (not textbooks) at your school? Are you interested in reading them? Why or why not?

(Important)

21. ***(Restart here) Are there any books that you want to have at school, but can't get?**
22. Do your teachers read books (not textbooks) to you or encourage you to read them on your own at home or at school? And how do you respond?

SECTION 3: BOOK USE

23. Do you have anything else that you would like to tell me about the way you use books at school and at home?

Now, that brings us to the end of our talk. Thank you very much for talking with me.

ANNEX 4: LIBROS CASE SELECTION BRIEF

CASE SELECTION BRIEF: RWANDA

October 2022

OVERVIEW

The Learning to Improve Book Resource Operational Systems (LIBROS) study aims to identify and disseminate feasible policy and program solutions to strengthen primary education level book supply chains (BSCs) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) via a study in Rwanda and two additional countries. The study will answer three research questions:

> RQ_1: What are the characteristics and perceived impacts of a specific strategy designed to improve Rwanda's primary book supply chain?
> RQ_2: How and under what conditions was the improvement strategy developed and implemented?
> RQ_3: What challenges were observed and addressed during the process? What are additional supports required for the fuller success of the improvement strategy?

This case selection brief presents the process and decisions that led to a selection of the specific BSC improvement strategy the LIBROS study intends to explore. As we detail below, the BSC strategy under study was identified through a multi-step case identification and review process. This process involved:

- **Step 1:** Exploring notable challenges and improvement strategies in Rwanda's primary BSC during the past ten years;
- **Step 2:** Validating and prioritizing the identified improvements and strategies through a two-day review workshop with experts and key stakeholders who are knowledgeable about Rwanda's BSC and the broader primary education system;
- **Step 3:** Evaluating the prioritized strategies and determining the specific strategy the LIBROS study would study in depth

Over the following few pages, we will detail the outputs and factors considered in each step of the case selection process outlined above.

EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES IN RWANDA'S PRIMARY BSC

We explored challenges and improvement strategies in Rwanda's primary BSC over the past ten years through a review of relevant literature and consultations with stakeholders in the BSC sector. The literature review involved peer-reviewed journal articles and policy/program documents, including public data on the availability of textbooks in primary schools. Concurrently, we consulted with several individuals recognized as experts in Rwanda's BSC system. Some of these experts were the authors of the literature we reviewed. Others were book researchers, authors, publishers, policy-makers, and program implementers.

Challenges

In Rwanda, various challenges exist across different steps of the BSC. They include:

First, the LOI has frequently changed in primary education during the last decades: from French to English, English to Kinyarwanda—one of the official languages of Rwanda along with English, French, and Kiswahili—and back to English again in the year in 2009 for all general education except the lower primary where teaching remained in Kinyarwanda (Pearson, 2013; MINEDUC, 2018). Since December 2019, English language is a medium of instruction in whole primary (MINEDUC, 2019). However, the planning, development, and provision of new curricular materials did not always adequately precede these changes (Pearson, 2013), leading to a shortage of textbooks and other reading books in the language(s) of instruction among learners and teachers. Moreover, as the language(s) of instruction kept changing, the existing textbooks, albeit still in usable condition, could not be used in schools as they were no longer aligned with the curriculum (Ndihokubwayo & Habiyaremye, 2018).

Second, beginning in 2015, Rwanda's primary education system shifted from KBC to CBC. KBC refers to a curriculum that focuses on knowledge and skills acquisition. This is different from a CBC which focuses on knowledge creation and application for learners' lifelong development. In CBC, learners are encouraged to apply acquired skills and knowledge in authentic situations (Ngendahayo & Askell-Williams, 2016). The curricular shift from the former to the latter caused the shortage in primary textbook provision to become more pronounced (Ministry of Education, 2018; Ndihokubwayo & Habiyambere, 2018) as textbooks developed and provided under the former curriculum did not use the instructional approach required by the later type (Ndihokubwayo & Habiyaremye, 2018). This exacerbated textbook shortages among learners and teachers in primary schools (Umuhoza & Uworwabayeho, 2021).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19 to 2023/24 (ESSP 2018/19-2023/24) recommends a pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1 for general education (MINEDUC, 2018). This policy has not yet been

realized. For example in primary schools, the ratio is 1:1 in Kinyarwanda and English, as indicated in the table below (Ministry of Education, 2021). **Table A1** presents the situation of textbook ratios in recent years. Concerning the trade books, a lack of level- and age-appropriate is especially evident in the lower primary grades in the Kinyarwanda language (Cole, 2016).

Table A1. Pupil to textbook ratio in primary education from 2018 to 2021

Pupils book ratio	2018	2019	2020/2021
Kinyarwanda	1	2	1
English	1	1	1
Mathematics	2	2	2
Social and Religious studies	3	3	3
Elementary Science and Technology	4	4	5

Source: MINEDUC (2021, 72)

Third, accessible textbooks and readers are almost absent for students with special needs (USAID & Save the Children, 2021). The market for this population is too small for for-profit publishers to publish such textbooks and readers without subsidies or other incentives (Save the Children, 2019).

Finally, amidst the shortages, it has been observed that, in some schools, some of the available textbooks remain unused by learners or teachers. A stated reason for this is that these schools fear that books can be stolen or damaged once given to students (Umuhoza & Uworwabayeho, 2021). While this school-level "textbook management strategy" is a situation-informed, logical decision, it results in a loss of opportunities to learn for students. At the same time, this approach further complicates book planning and forecasting, making data on textbook availability and use imprecise and unpredictable (Lizzi et al., 2017).

Improvement Strategies

Stakeholders, including domestic and international partners, have implemented a number of strategies to address challenges in Rwanda's BSC. These strategies include the following:

The first notable intervention targeted **the planning and forecasting stage of the BSC.** In 2016, MINEDUC established a digital system that enables collaboration between REB and schools to identify schools' needs for textbooks (Browne, 2015). The School Data Management System (SDMS) provides data on the number of students and available books at each school and REB plans and forecasts accordingly.

Second, there have been interventions focused on **title development.** In 2017, the government, in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), embarked on developing English language textbooks at the primary level (Cozzolino, 2020) to improve teaching and learning in English among teachers and students in primary schools following the change of the LOI to English (Laviolette, 2012).

Another title development innovation focused on **the development of English textbooks for all subjects.** In 2018, the Government of Rwanda, through the MINEDUC and REB, has produced textbooks in English for all subjects in primary education through the in-house textbook production initiative, i.e., producing textbooks within the country instead of relying on international outsourcing. This in-house textbook production aims to ensure that textbooks are available for learners and teachers and reflects the local context of Rwandan values and culture (Favour, 2022). Also, REB took over the production of textbooks from private contractors. It now has the copyright of all the textbooks used in primary and secondary education, including those produced by private publishers. Some of these books are available online for public access if they have connectivity. MINEDUC has recently announced plans to invest 10 billion Rwandan francs (about 9.4 million US dollars) in scaling up in-house textbook production annually, starting in 2022 (Favour, 2022).

Fourth, **accessible textbooks and technology for learners with special needs have been developed,** also contributing to enhancing the title development stage of the BSC. EKitabu (That is 'eBook' in Kiswahili), with support from USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government, is developing fee-free digital reading material and video storybooks in sign language. These materials and content are accessible online for all children with special needs. Similarly, Save the Children, in collaboration with an organization of people with a disability called UWEZO Youth Empowerment ('capacity' in Kiswahili), has helped ensure published textbooks are inclusive. They produce textbooks in digital formats and convert them into sign language and braille, as confirmed by the Education Programme Manager at Save the Children.

Fifth, there has been **robust non-governmental support for the development of supplementary reading books (trade books).** These actors included Save the Children, which implemented the Rwandan Children's Book Initiative (RCBI) and produced thousands of copies of locally made local language children's books for ages 7 - 9 between 2014 - 2018 (Cozzolino, 2020; Malik et al., 2015). Besides title development, non-governmental engagement in Rwanda's BSC extends to capacity strengthening among private publishers and specialists involved in title development. For instance, the RCBI provided technical training and mentoring to local publishers, authors, illustrators, designers, and editors to develop relevant skills to strengthen the capacity of the publishing industry overall and its constituent parts (Cozzolino, 2020).

Partners also contributed not only in title development but also in the use of reading materials and the impact has been significant. This is the case of USAID through the implementation of the Literacy,

Language and Learning Initiative (L3) and Community Libraries (CLs). The whole project consisted of putting textbooks in the hands of children, parents, and community members. L3 worked closely with community partners and established libraries across the country in the most rural and lowest-income communities, where there are few opportunities to access rich and enjoyable reading materials. This initiative promoted greater parent/community involvement in students' reading. It also raised the awareness of students, parents and communities towards the importance and enjoyment of reading (Bugingo & Rutayisire, 2016). Currently, the Ministry of Education in partnership with other stakeholders organizes a yearly national literacy month to strengthen the reading and writing culture for learners at school and at home to ensure that parents get involved in that process as highlighted by the Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education when launching the National literacy month in September 2020 (MINEDUC, 2020).

Validating and Prioritizing the Identified Strategies

We evaluated the BSC improvement strategies outlined above through a two-day systems thinking workshop with critical stakeholders in Rwanda's BSC and the broader primary education sector. The stakeholders included education program managers from the MINEDUC, REB, USAID, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, Education Development Trust, British Council, University of Rwanda-College of Education, University of Kigali, Rwanda Children's Book Initiative (publishers), and eKitabu, among others. Together, these stakeholders represented different government and private research institutions whose responsibilities and work affects different parts of the BSC.

At the workshop, the participants reviewed the interventions that had been analyzed by the research team and suggested others be considered. The participants and the research team collaboratively reviewed how each strategy had and could address the most pressing challenges in Rwanda's BSC. After the review, the participants voted to prioritize strategies.

Two strategies emerged as top priorities. The first was the public-private partnership in title development for textbooks and supplementary readers and for book use. The second was the development of accessible digital textbooks and technology for children with disabilities. We describe these two strategies in detail in the following section. We also explain why and how each can help the LIBROS study address its research questions.

Evaluating the Suitability of Each Prioritized Strategy for the LIBROS Study

We applied several criteria to the evaluation of the strategies, to ensure that the selected strategy could provide the information necessary. Specific evaluation criteria included (a) the strategy's relevance to critical challenges in Rwanda's BSC, (b) the breadth and types of stakeholders involved in the

development or implementation of a specific strategy, (c) accessibility to these stakeholders for data collection, and (d) the strategy's impact to date.

Strategy 1: Public-Private Partnership in Title Development and Use

As we discussed above, there has been intensive investment by the public and private (non-governmental) sectors in title development and book use, especially at the primary education level. In the public sector, the government, through the MINEDUC and REB, has produced an increased number and type of textbooks in English for all subjects in primary education MINEDUC (2021). The government has also launched an in-house textbook production initiative to make textbooks available online at no cost to teachers and learners (Favour, 2022). This government effort was accompanied by the private sector's efforts in the development of Kinyarwanda reading books (Cozzolino, 2020). Public-private partnerships strengthened title development and book production, through the provision of technical support to develop textbooks, supplementary reading materials, and effective book policies.

As mentioned above, non-governmental partners like Save the Children through RCBI contributed to capacity strengthening of publishers and specialists involved in title development to support the local publishing industry. The publishers also benefit the technical guidance and approval from REB before putting books on the market. As highlighted by the CEO of Education Development Consult, a local book publishing company, the private publishers consult REB about the themes of the curriculum that need more books; then proceed to title development[1] following the book development guide of REB. Only the validated titles/books at 70% are accepted to be produced[2] and used in schools. Different non-government institutions who support the government in book distribution[3] are the main clients such as USAID in supporting its projects, Save the Children, and World Vision.

In addition, the MINEDUC, in partnership with other private stakeholders, organizes a national literacy month to strengthen reading and writing culture for learners at school and at home. These collaborations have enriched the development and use of a variety of reading resources for children in Rwanda.

Studying this public-private partnership for children's book development would be useful in multiple ways for the LIBROS study. First, despite recent progress, the shortage of learning materials persists in Rwandan households, schools, and communities. Systemically investigating how these partnerships were formed and evolved is critical and timely. The information generated will offer meaningful insight into improving the availability of quality reading resources for children in Rwanda. Furthermore, the extensive collaboration of a range of actors across the public and private sectors indicate high level interest and investment in this particular strategy.

Strategy 2: Accessible textbooks and technology for learners with special needs

This strategy has teaching and learning materials for learners with special needs, with features like Braille, sign language, text highlight, large print, and audio. It has also contributed to changing the public's perception of the need for accessible materials (USAID & Save the Children, 2021). Authors and private publishers are often under-incentivized to publish books for learners with special needs, due likely to the small market and consequently small profit potential (Save the Children, 2019). Uncovering the mechanisms that supported this strategy will benefit Rwanda and other countries that are seeking to ensure quality, inclusive education for all children.

Similar to the first strategy discussed above, the second strategy involves a number of domestic and international stakeholders including USAID, E-Kitabu, UNICEF, Organization of People with Disability (OPD), MINEDUC, REB, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and NGOs such as Save the Children. This extensive network will enhance the relevance of the LIBROS study in Rwanda's BSC sector and promote the participation of key informants. Furthermore, the education system is currently increasing its focus on the use of inclusive technology (MINEDUC, 2018). Exploring this is an excellent opportunity to analyze the implementation of this policy.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, both strategies match LIBROS's research design and goal. We chose to further explore public-private partnership in title development and use given this strategy's impact across several steps of the BSC and relevance to a wide range of stakeholders in Rwanda's education system. Globally, the case will inform governments, donors, and other development partners on how to form and sustain these types of BSCpublic-private partnerships, what challenges these partnerships may encounter, and how they can be addressed to support the provision of quality learning resources for all children at large scale.

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